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1

# THE LETTER OF TANSAR

*Translated by*

M. BOYCE



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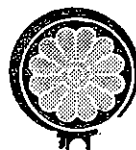
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*General Editors' Note*

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TO THE HONOURED MEMORY OF  
JAMES DARMESTETER

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## FOREWORD

*The present translation of the Letter of Tansar, as is explained in more detail in the introduction, has its origin in a seminar held jointly, a number of years ago, at the School of Oriental & African Studies, London, by Professor W.B. Henning and Professor Mojtaba Minovi. I am indebted to my friend Professor Ehsan Yar-Shater for persuading me finally to prepare the rough draft for publication; but the death of Professor Henning while the work was in the press has cast a shadow over the undertaking.*

*I owe gratitude to Professor Giuseppe Tucci for accepting the translation for inclusion in the Rome Oriental Series; and to Professor Antonio Gargano for his kindness and helpfulness in seeing it through the press.*

## INTRODUCTION

The *Letter of Tansar* is a fugitive piece of Middle Persian literature, the greater part of which, being Zoroastrian, vanished like snow in the heat of the Islamic summer. By "Middle Persian" is meant the language of Persia from about the third century B. C. to the ninth century A. C.; but since little is known of Persia proper (that is, the modern province of Fars) under Parthian rule, the term is generally used more specifically for the language of Persia during the days of the great Sasanian Empire (c. 224 – 637 A.C.) and the centuries immediately following its downfall, until modern Persian, with its rich borrowings from the speech of the Arab conquerors, gradually emerged. This Middle Persian language was written in a script derived from the Aramaic script used in the chancelleries of the Achaemenian Empire. With the coming of Islam this script was largely abandoned for the Arabic alphabet; and in its disuse it came to be called the "ancient" or "heroic" script, the Persian word being "Pahlavi". The same term was applied also to the language and literature of Sasanian Persia, so that in ordinary usage "Pahlavi" and "Middle Persian" are synonymous.

The literature of Sasanian Persia was large and varied, its glory being, it seems, minstrel-poetry, which was never written down within the period. This poetry was neglected after the conquest, when new fashions in verse came into being under the influence of Arabic literature; and being forgotten, it disappeared. Its influence survives in the *Šāhnāme*, true heir to the old epic tradition; and the long romantic poem, *Vis u Rāmīn*, is a re-writing by a Muslim author of an old minstrel work. We know Sasanian poetry chiefly, however, not through itself, but through stories of its beauty and its power to stir men's minds and hearts <sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See further "The Parthian *gōsān* and Iranian Minstrel Tradition" *JRAS* 1957, pp. 10–45.

There was also an unwritten prose literature of entertainment, in the shape of short stories, some of which, collected and written down towards the end of the Sasanian period, evolved into books such as the "Thousand and One Nights". The influence of written fables of Indian origin seems to have helped this development from the sixth century onwards. Broadly speaking, however, works of entertainment were not committed to writing in Sasanian Persia. Writing, though known for centuries, was reserved for practical purposes (such as letters, state and legal documents, and chronicles), or for the dignity of religious or scholarly works. The learning of Sasanian Persia developed, however, under the aegis of the Zoroastrian church, as did that of medieval Persia under the aegis of Islam. After the Arab conquest the scientific and didactic books of the Sasanian period became therefore, in the eyes of the majority, heretical, and being discarded or superseded, they disappeared almost as completely as the unwritten works.

Little remains, therefore, of the former wealth of Middle Persian literature. What survives falls into two categories: a small but valuable collection of religious books, and books connected with religion, preserved in the Pahlavi language and script by the little band of steadfast Zoroastrians; and a collection of more general works translated either into Arabic or into modern Persian by Persian Muslims. Among these translators the best known is 'Abdu'llāh ibnu-l Muqaffa', a Persian of Fars, and a convert (though of somewhat doubtful orthodoxy) from Zoroastrianism to Islam, who died about 760 A.C. Ibnu-l Muqaffa' is famed, not only for the number and importance of his translations, but also for their elegance. One of the works which he translated is the *Letter of Tansar*<sup>1</sup>. Unfortunately his rendering has not survived; but in the thirteenth century of our era a certain Muḥammad b. al-Ḥasan b. Isfandiyyār, generally known as Ibn Isfandiyyār, a native of Tabaristān, undertook to write a history of his home province. While engaged on this task he visited Xwārezm, then a flourishing city; and there in a bookseller's shop he came on a volume containing ten separate treatises, among them the Arabic version of the *Letter* by Ibnu-l Muqaffa'. This he re-translated into the Persian of his own time,

<sup>1</sup> See F. Gabrieli "L'opera di Ibn al-Muqaffa'" *Rivista degli Studi Orientali*, XIII (1931-1932), pp. 197-247, with particular reference to the translation of the *Letter of Tansar*, pp. 217-18.

and embodied in his *History of Tabaristān*<sup>1</sup>; and it is only thus, and in short passages cited in Arabic by historians such as Mas'ūdī and Al-Bīrūnī<sup>2</sup>, that the *Letter* exists today.

Some of these Arabic citations evidently derive, not from the version of Ibnu-l Muqaffa', but directly or indirectly from the Pahlavi text; for in some of them the name of the author of the *Letter* is given, not as *Tansar*, but as *Tōsar*. The ambiguity lies in the Pahlavi script<sup>3</sup>. Ibnu-l Muqaffa' read the name as *Tansar*, and those who have the form *Tōsar* should not, accordingly, have depended on his text<sup>4</sup>.

Ibnu-l Muqaffa' evidently made some additions to the Pahlavi original, inserting, "no doubt to make the ancient text more respectable to his Muslim readers"<sup>5</sup> quotations from the Qur'ān and Bible. He was probably also responsible for various illustrative verses, some of them in elegant Persian<sup>6</sup>. Other verses of poorer quality seem more likely to have been added by Ibn Isfandiyyār, a man of much lesser literary stature and taste. Gratitude to him for preserving the *Letter* in its entirety cannot but be tempered by recognition of his shortcomings as a translator. He is unfortunately both pedestrian and loquacious, reluctant to utter in one phrase what can be reiterated in two or three, or four, or more. He therefore dilutes and enfeebles. A collation of the fugitive passages surviving in Arabic with his parallel versions shows that this verbosity is his own, and not in the original<sup>7</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See E. G. Browne's *Abridged Translation of the History of Tabaristān* (Gibb Memorial Series, Vol. II, 1905) p. 6; 'Abbas Iqbal, *Tarix-i Tabaristān* (Tehran, 1942) pp. 12-41.

<sup>2</sup> References to these passages are given by A. Christensen in his article "Abarsām et Tansar" *Acta Orientalia*, X (1932), p. 46 f.

<sup>3</sup> See further below, p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> See A. Christensen, *L'Empire des Sassanides* (Copenhagen, 1907), p. 51 n. 1. The matter is not, however, quite clear cut; for a passage beginning "This is the meaning of the expression « proxy » in their religion", which one would naturally attribute to Ibnu-l Muqaffa', is found both in Ibn Isfandiyyār's version and in al-Bīrūnī's *India*, although al-Bīrūnī gives as his authority the *Book of Tōsar*; see below, transl. p. 46 with n. 3.

<sup>5</sup> J. Darmesteter, *Journal asiatique*, 1894, p. 189.

<sup>6</sup> See, e.g., below, p. 68 with n. 2. In the present translation, Arabic citations are given in italics, Persian ones are set in inverted commas.

<sup>7</sup> Such a collation, between a citation by Mas'ūdī and the corresponding rendering by Ibn Isfandiyyār, was made by Muḥammad 'Alī Jamāl-zāde in *Kāve*, 5th. year, no. 11, p. 7, see Christensen, *Acta Orientalia*, X, p. 46 n. 9. In his own article Christensen points out that the *Letter of Tansar* was familiar also to the unknown author of the twelfth-century *Fārs Nāme*; and he sets together parallel passages from that work and Ibn Isfandiyyār's (loc. cit., pp. 50-54). These also demonstrate Ibn Isfandiyyār's long-windedness. Christen-

Nevertheless, even through his flow of words, and his occasional misunderstandings of the Arabic text, there emerge the authentic accents of a Sasanian treatise, whose phrases and thoughts can be paralleled from extant Pahlavi works.

In these Pahlavi works the influence of the oral tradition of literature is plain. One of the characteristics of this is that it is largely anonymous. Another is that, though the tradition as a whole is immensely conservative (the hymns of Zoroaster himself were preserved unwritten and virtually intact for hundreds of years), yet in all but the most sacred texts adaptations and additions were made in the course of transmission. There was no copyright, and nothing that could be recognized as plagiarism in a tradition in which texts were recreated by word of mouth for successive generations. These characteristics (anonymity, and free adaptation and addition) are found also in the written literature, which throughout the Sasanian period is still very much the dependent child of the oral tradition. Together with the relative fewness of the surviving works, they make the precise dating of any given Sasanian text a very difficult matter. Further factors which create problems are a poor manuscript-tradition (no manuscript survives from earlier than the 14th century A.C., and in those which exist there are many scribal inaccuracies), and a difficult script. In Book Pahlavi (the developed Pahlavi script known to us from these mss.) a number of letters have fallen together, and ambiguities abound.

In the form in which we have it, the *Letter of Tansar* is itself an anonymous work, for which Ibnu-l Muqaffa' gives as his authority one Bahrām son of Xorzād, and "the learned men of Pars"<sup>1</sup>. The

sen has moreover found a passage in the *Fārs Nāme*, evidently derived from the *Letter o Tansar*, which is missing from Ibn Isfandiār's version (see below, p. 66, note ). From this he concluded (*op. cit.*, p. 55) that "Ibn Isfandiār sometimes abridged the text of Ibnu'l Muqaffa'". The passage in question is short, however, and Ibn Isfandiār may have omitted it by accident. To abbreviate does not seem in his character.

<sup>1</sup> The actual statement is that Ibnu-l Muqaffa' "spoke on the authority of Bahrām bin Xorzād, who (spoke) on the authority of his father Manūčīhr, mōbad of Xorāsān, and that of the learned men of Pars". The natural interpretation of this, syntactically, is that Bahrām son of Xorzād had as his father Manūčīhr. There are no ms.-variants to explain this contradiction (see below, p. 26 note 1). Darmesteter firmly took the relative sentence to qualify the dependent noun Xorzād, and thus understood Manūčīhr to be the father not of Bahrām, but of Xorzād (*JAs.*, 1894, p. 191). As he points out, the statement may refer (in the usual manner of Pahlavi colophons) to a copyist of the ms., Bahrām, who copied it from another ms. in his father's possession; or it may refer to a redactor of the text

work begins with a brief sketch of the history of Iran down to the time of Ardašīr, the first Sasanian king (who reigned c. 224-240 A.C.): the death of Darius, the division of Iran by Alexander among many local kings, Alexander's own death, the rise, long after, of Ardašīr himself, and his conquest of 90 descendants of those local kings. This sketch serves as introduction. The writer then tells how one of the kings, Gušnasp, king of Parišwār<sup>1</sup> and Tabaristān, delayed in submitting to Ardašīr; and how Ardašīr on his side was slow to proceed against him, because his forbears "had retaken Parišwār by force and arms from Alexander's lieutenants, and... had adhered to the faith and party of the kings of Pars"<sup>2</sup>. Gušnasp thus had a respite during which he wrote to Tansar, chief herbad of Ardašīr, setting out reasons for his reluctance to declare allegiance to the king. The bulk of the work consists of the letter written him in reply by Tansar, in which his points are taken one by one. Whether or not this letter can be regarded as an authentic document of the time of Ardašīr has been a matter for discussion since the beginning of the present century.

The putative author of the *Letter* is known to us from a primary Zoroastrian source, the *Dēnkard*, of which, unfortunately, it has been truly said: "the text of this formidable work is notoriously corrupt, and its style cramped, arid, and obscure"<sup>3</sup>. Six books of the *Dēnkard* survive. In Book III there are two passages recording the names of those who helped preserve the sacred texts of the Zoroastrians. The longer of these passages<sup>4</sup> appears to be a document of the time of Xosrau I Anōšīrvān (531-78 A.C.), since in it Xosrau is referred to as "his present Majesty" (*im bay*)<sup>5</sup>. In this account it is said that, after the havoc wrought by Alexander, Valaxš the Arsacid ordered the preservation of the Avesta and Zand throughout his lands. After him the King of kings, Ardašīr son of Pāpak, sought "through the

<sup>1</sup> On the extent of Parišwār see W. B. Henning's remarks, below p. 29, note 7. In the present work Persian forms (such as Gušnasp, Tabaristān, Pārs) have been preferred to Arabicised ones (Jasnaf, Tabaristān, Fārs).

<sup>2</sup> Translation, below, pp. 29-30.

<sup>3</sup> R. C. Zaehner, *Zurvan, a Zoroastrian Dilemma* (Oxford, 1955), p. 7.

<sup>4</sup> *Dēnkard*, ed. D. M. Madan (Bombay, 1911), Vol. I, pp. 411-12; transcribed by H. W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Oxford, 1943), appendix VII, pp. 218-19; and by Zaehner, *op. cit.*, pp. 31-2, with translation, pp. 7-9.

<sup>5</sup> See C. Bartholomae, *Zur Kenntnis der mitteliranischen Mundarten*, iii (Sb. Heidelberg Ak. W., 1920), p. 9, n. 2.



just authority of Tansar" (*pad rāst-dastwarīh ī Tansar*)<sup>1</sup> to gather the scattered teachings of the faith at his own court. "Tansar undertook the task, and accepted that one [traditional text?], and rejected the other from the canon" (*Tansar abar mad ud hān ī ēwag frāz padīrift ud abārig az dastwar[ih] hišt*)<sup>2</sup>. In the second passage<sup>3</sup> it is similarly said that, when Ardašīr had the scattered works collected in one place, "the orthodox, righteous Tansar was *hērbad*, and he undertook the task ..." (*poryōtkēš ahlaw Tansar hērbad būd ud abar mad* ...) <sup>4</sup>. A ms. variant here gives Tansar the title *hērbadān hērbad* i.e. "chief *hērbad*". The same title is given him in the *Letter*, and also in various Islamic histories; but it is in fact doubtful whether this title existed in the early Sasanian period. The functions, and relative rank, of the two groups of Zoroastrian priests, the *hērbads* and the *mōbads*, are also not clearly known for that epoch.

Tansar's name occurs again in Book VII of the *Dēnkard*. This book, deriving apparently from Avestan sources with Middle Persian enlargements, contains a chapter about great men and events between the death of king Vištāsp (Zoroaster's patron) and the "end of the kingship of Ērānšahr" <sup>5</sup>. Ardašīr ī Pāpakān is mentioned, "and with him Tansar" (*u-š Tansar pad abāgih*) <sup>6</sup>. The text describes (obscurely) the troubles which will come upon the land of Iran in their day, and ends: "Upon that land that evil strife will come, through that evil devil-worship and that evil slandering. And that evil strife will not be ended for that land, nor that evil devil-worship, nor that evil slandering, until they give acceptance to him, Tansar the priest, the spiritual leader, eloquent, truthful, just. And when they give acceptance to Tansar ... those lands, if they wish, will find healing, instead of divergence from Zoroaster's faith". (*abar ō hān dēh hān apārōn anāštīh padid, pad hān apārōn dēwāsn ud pad hān apārōn spazgih. Ud nē-z az hān dēh hān apārōn anāštīh frāz absihēd, nē hān apārōn dēwāsn ud nē hān apārōn spazgih, tā ka ō awē \*dahēnd padīrišn, āhrōn ī mēnōg*

<sup>1</sup> *Dēnkard*, ed. Madan, p. 412 l. 12.

<sup>2</sup> *Dēnkard*, ll. 13-14.

<sup>3</sup> *Dēnkard*, pp. 404-06; transcribed by Bailey, *op. cit.*, pp. 217-18.

<sup>4</sup> *Dēnkard*, p. 406 l. 6.

<sup>5</sup> *Dēnkard* Bk VII Chapter 7; ed. Madan, vol. II, p. 651 ff.; translated by E. West, *Sacred Books of the East*, XLVII, p. 82 ff.

<sup>6</sup> *Dēnkard*, p. 651 ll. 17-18.

*sardār ī purr-guštār ī rāst-guštār ī ahlaw, Tansar. Ud ka dahēnd padīrišn ō ... Tansar, ast ku awēšān dēh, ka xwāhēnd, bēšāzišn windēnd, ud nē an-ēwēnagih az hān ī Zarduxšt dēn*) <sup>1</sup>.

This passage suggests that Tansar laboured, not only to establish a canon of scripture and religious orthodoxy, but also to promote concord in the land of Iran, which, in the light of his close link with Ardašīr, could only mean for him unity under that monarch's rule. It is precisely for this end that we see him striving in the *Letter*. Here, writing to a co-religionist, he is not concerned to combat devil-worship, but to press Ardašīr's claims as overlord and upholder of the faith, and to persuade Gušnasp not to stand out against him, nor to believe "evil slandering" about him. Our two Sasanian sources, the *Dēnkard* and the *Letter*, are thus admirably in accord. Secondary Islamic sources preserve the same tradition.

For the reasons already indicated, however, Pahlavi books are not ideal historical sources; and inscriptional evidence, where it exists, is greatly to be preferred. So far, however, the only evidence an inscription has provided with regard to Tansar is for the form of his name. This varies in the Islamic sources <sup>2</sup>, where two spellings predominate, in transliteration *tnsr* and *twsr*. These can both derive from a single late Pahlavi form, since in Book Pahlavi the letter *w* (also representing *ū/ō*) is identical with the letter *n*. Until the present century no other instance of either a *tnsr* or a *twsr* was known; and since a deplorable etymology in the *Letter* <sup>3</sup>, based on a pronunciation *Tansar*, is attributed to Bahrām ī Xorzād, it seemed right to adopt this as the traditional Zoroastrian pronunciation.

In this century, however, two great Sasanian inscriptions have been uncovered on the base of the Ka'ba-yi Zardušt, an Achaemenian building at the foot of the mountain-wall of Naqš-e Rostam, near Persepolis, where Darius and his successors were buried. One inscription <sup>4</sup>, in Middle Persian, Parthian and Greek, was carved by command of Šābuhr I, son of Ardašīr (who reigned c. 240-270 A.C.).

<sup>1</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 652 ll. 9-17; on this passage see M. Molé, *Culte, Mythe et Cosmologie dans L'Iran ancien* (Paris, 1963), p. 213.

<sup>2</sup> See Darmesteter, *Journal asiatique*, 1894, pp. 186-87; M. Minovi, preface to his edition of the *Tansar Nāme* (Tehran, 1932), pp. x-4.

<sup>3</sup> See translation below, p. 30, with note 1.

<sup>4</sup> See M. Sprengling, *Third Century Iran. Sapor and Kartir* (Chicago, 1953), with

It records his victories, and also the names of his father's court and his own for whom religious rites were performed through endowments. Among those of Šābuhr's own time appears one Mihrag son of Tōsar (in Middle Persian, l. 30, *mtrky ZY twslk'n*; Parthian, l. 24, *mtrk twsrkn*, Greek, line 59, *μερικ τοῦσσεργαν*). This occurrence of a Sasanian proper name *Tōsar* makes it probable that the priest's name is also to be read in this way; but the form *Tansar* has by now gained too wide a currency for it to be usefully displaced.

For Ardašīr's time, no priest is mentioned in the inscription; but towards the end of the names given for Šābuhr's reign is that of "Kardēr the hērbad" (Middle Persian, l. 34, *krtyr ZY 'yhrpt*; Parthian l. 28 *krtyr 'hrpty*; Greek, l. 66, *καρτερ μαγον*); and beneath Šābuhr's own inscription is another, in Middle Persian only, carved by this same priest<sup>1</sup>. Another short inscription of Kardēr's is to be found across the wide valley at Naqš-i Rajab<sup>2</sup>, a deep small cleft in the rocks where Sasanian kings set inscriptions. Here a portrait of Kardēr, with hand upraised, is carved beside the text. Further, two long inscriptions of his exist, one on the mountain-face of Naqš-i Rustam<sup>3</sup> itself, near the *Ka'ba*; the other far away to the south, near the hamlet of Sar-Mašhad in Fars<sup>4</sup>.

The existence of these inscriptions is in itself remarkable. No king of the Sasanian period has left such a wealth of inscribed text, certainly no other commoner. It is plain that Kardēr was a great and powerful personage. He was also remarkably long-lived. In his inscriptions he tells us that he was a *hērbad* under Ardašīr (although

this he mentions only in the longer inscriptions of Naqš-i Rustam and Sar-Mašhad). Šābuhr made him *mōbad* and *hērbad*. Under Hōrmīzd I he received the title (borne by others after him) of *Mōbad of Ōhrmazd*; and this he bore also under Vahrām I, II and III, the last-named of whom further conferred on him the honorific *Boxt-ruwān-Varhrān* ("Saved is the soul of Vahrām"). His name finally appears on the monument set up at Paikuli by Narseh, who reigned 293–302 A.C.<sup>1</sup>. He thus lived through the reigns of six kings, and in four of them enjoyed power and position. Under Narseh dignity was still accorded him. Even if we assume – as is probable – that he was only young when Ardašīr's reign ended, at Narseh's accession he must have been at least in his seventies.

Kardēr in his inscriptions concerns himself much with religion. He declares that he laboured to promote true beliefs within the empire, in Iran and non-Iran, particularly beliefs in the life hereafter, with reward or punishment for conduct here below; that he encouraged religious practice, with offerings and services; that he chastised unbelievers, upbraided and improved heretics, had idols destroyed and sacred fires established throughout the realm. His inscriptions have been carved that these acts of his may be made known, and his name not forgotten by those who come after.

The strange fact is that, had Kardēr not wrought in this manner to secure his own fame, he would have been known to us only from hostile sources. His name occurs, blackly, in Manichaean books<sup>2</sup>, for it was one of his achievements, under Bahrām I, to bring about the martyrdom of Mani and the persecution of his followers. In the Zoroastrian tradition, Kardēr has been utterly forgotten. This fact, though perplexing, is not so strange as it first appears, when one considers the startling gaps which exist in early Sasanian history. Some scholars have, however, boggled at it; and since Tansar the *hērbad* is unknown in Sasanian inscriptions, whereas Kardēr the *hērbad* and *mōbad* is unknown in Pahlavi literary tradition, they have sought to resolve the problem by identifying the two (thus decreasing again

references to earlier publications; E. Honigmann and A. Maricq, *Recherches sur les res gestae divi Saporis* (Louvain, 1953); W. B. Henning, "Notes on the Great Inscription of Šāpūr I", *Jackson Memorial Volume* (Bombay, 1954), pp. 40–54; A. Maricq, "Res gestae divi Saporis", *Syria*, XXXV (1958), pp. 295–360.

<sup>1</sup> See Sprengling, *op. cit.*, pp. 46–60; W. B. Henning, "Minor Inscriptions of Kartir", *Corpus Inscriptionum Iranicarum*, Part III, Vol. II, Plates, Portfolio III, plates lxxi–lxxix (London, 1963); M.–L. Chaumont, "L'inscription de Kartir", *Journal asiatique*, 1960, p. 339 ff.; this translation has been reproduced, with minor alterations by the author, by R. Gagé in his *La Montée des Sassanides et L'Heure de Palmyre* (Paris, 1964), pp. 323–28.

<sup>2</sup> See Sprengling, *op. cit.*, pp. 63–69; Henning, *op. cit.*, plates lxxx–lxxiv.

<sup>3</sup> See Sprengling, *op. cit.*, p. 61; Henning, "The Inscription of Naqš-i Rustam", *C.I.I.*, Part III, Vol. II, Plates, Portfolio II (London, 1957), with Portfolio III, plates xlix–lxx.

<sup>4</sup> See Henning, "The Inscription of Sar-Mašhad", *C.I.I.*, Part III, Vol. II, Plates, Portfolio I (London, 1955).

<sup>1</sup> See E. Herzfeld, *Paikuli* (Berlin, 1924) p. 100 (Middle Persian l. 16, Parthian l. 15).

<sup>2</sup> See H. J. Polotsky, *Manichäische Homilien* (Stuttgart, 1934), p. 45, ll. 14–17 and ff.; W. B. Henning, "Mani's Last Journey", *Bulletin of the School of Oriental and African Studies*, X, 4 (1942), p. 948 (text T ii D 163 l. 11). (Kardēr the son of Ardawān, *ibid.*, p. 950 ff., is now known to be a different person, see below, p. 10, n. 2).

by one the known *personae* of the period)<sup>1</sup>. This solution cannot be seriously entertained; the objections are too numerous. Firstly, there is the cardinal point of the difference in names. To explain this away, it has been suggested that Kardēr was not a proper name, but an honorific; but, apart from all other difficulties inherent in this explanation, it founders on the fact that Kardēr is an attested name from the late Achaemenian and Sasanian periods<sup>2</sup>. Earlier, before Kardēr's inscriptions had been studied, Christensen suggested that the name Tansar might be an honorific<sup>3</sup>. Now this name, in the form Tōsar, has also been attested. There are thus two distinct, established, proper names, Kardēr and Tōsar. It is natural to assume them to have been borne by two distinct persons.

Secondly, chronology is against the suggestion. Tansar was evidently at the height of his power and influence under Ardašīr, whose reign ended c. A.C. 240. There is no evidence to suggest that Kardēr had attained eminence at that time, when, the natural presumption is, he was only a young man.

Thirdly, there is the point of their achievements. Tansar is chiefly celebrated in the literary tradition for his work in preserving the sacred texts of the Zoroastrians, and in establishing an orthodox canon. Kardēr, enumerating his own labours, does not include any such work among them; and it is indeed probable that, following soon after Tansar, he had no especial contribution to make in this field.

One reason why, in the teeth of evidence, the two priests have been identified, is that each of them in turn has been named the "founder" of the Sasanian Zoroastrian church. Since this part called for only one actor, and both men had been cast for it, the assumption had to be made that they were identical. In fact neither Tansar nor Kardēr makes any such claim, nor is it made for them in any primary source<sup>4</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See principally E. Herzfeld, *Archaeological History of Iran* (London, 1935), p. 100 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, p. 158; E. Porada, *Corpus of Near Eastern Seals*, I (Washington, 1948), no. 833. In Šābuhr's inscription on the *Ka'ba*, beneath the name of Kardēr the *hērbad* comes that of Kardēr son of Ardawān (Middle Persian l. 35, Parthian l. 28, Greek l. 67). This Kardēr is known also from a Middle Persian Manichaean fragment, M 3, l. 19; see Henning, *BSOAS*, X, 4, p. 950.

<sup>3</sup> See *Acta Orientalia*, X, p. 47.

<sup>4</sup> The statement that "the religion of Zoroaster ... (was) restored by Ardašīr" (transl., below, p. 62) is of a different order, and was evidently inspired in part by political expediency.

The founder of Zoroastrianism as a whole was Zoroaster; his religion was adopted by the Achaemenians, and there is evidence that it lived on in Pars, and elsewhere in Iran, in unbroken continuity throughout the Parthian period. Reform, and new zeal in spreading the faith, were evidently called for from time to time; but more than one reformer and more than one zealous priest are not only possible but even probable in the vigorous early years of Sasanian rule. The natural presumption is simply that Kardēr followed Tansar, either directly or after intermediaries, as another great leader of Zoroastrianism during that remarkable epoch.

To accept Tansar as a historical figure is one thing. To attribute to him the *Letter* is a separate matter. The first editor of the work, J. Darmesteter, took the document to be in the main authentic, with interpolations, made probably by Ibnu-l Muqaffa' at the time of translation<sup>1</sup>. Doubt was first voiced by J. Marquart<sup>2</sup>, who pointed out a historical inaccuracy. According to the *Letter*, the king of Kermān at the time of Ardašīr was one Qābūs, who voluntarily submitted to Ardašīr and was allowed to retain the title<sup>3</sup>; but according to other sources the king of Kermān then was a certain Valaxš, who was conquered by Ardašīr. This is borne out by Šābuhr's inscription on the *Ka'be-yi Zardušt*, where the third person given in the list of those living under Ardašīr is an "Ardašīr, king of Kermān"<sup>4</sup>. The old Kayanian names such as Qābūs seem to have become popular among the Sasanians only from the second half of the 5th. century onwards<sup>5</sup>. Marquart pointed out that the elder brother of Xosrau I Anōšīrvān, who ruled Pārīšwār before Xosrau's accession, was called Qābūs; and he thought that this might have suggested the name to the author or redactor of the *Letter*, which he thought was either written or re-drafted in Xosrau's own day. Independently A. Christensen had pointed out other historical inaccuracies<sup>6</sup>. Thus with regard to local kings, Ardašīr is made to say in the *Letter*: "No other man, not being of our house, shall

<sup>1</sup> In the *Journal asiatique*, 1894, text, pp. 185-250; transl. pp. 502-55. For the authenticity of the core of the work see especially his remarks on p. 196.

<sup>2</sup> In his *Ērānšāh nach der Geographie des Ps. Moses Xorenac'i* (Berlin, 1901), p. 30.

<sup>3</sup> See transl., below, pp. 34-35.

<sup>4</sup> Middle Persian version, l. 28; Parthian, l. 23; Greek l. 55.

<sup>5</sup> See Nöldeke, *Das iranische Nationalepos*, 2nd ed. (Berlin and Leipzig, 1920), p. 5.

<sup>6</sup> See his *L'Empire des Sassanides*, pp. 111-12. Christensen further developed his

be called king, but the Lords of the Marches – of Alān and the western region, of Xwārezm and Kābul”<sup>1</sup>. By these marcher-lords, Christensen points out, “are no doubt to be understood the *marzbān* of these countries, established by Xosrau I, who had the privilege of sitting on a throne of gold, and whose office, exceptionally, descended to their heirs”<sup>2</sup>.

In other passages the Turks, first known from the sixth century, are mentioned; and the borders of the Persian Empire are given as “from the river of Balkh up to the furthest borders of the land of Aḏarbāigān and of Persarmenia, and from the Euphrates and the land of the Arabs up to Ōmān and Makrān and thence to Kābul and Toxaristān”<sup>3</sup>. From this description Christensen deduced that the *Letter* was composed “after the conquests of Xosrau I in the east through the destruction of the Hephthalites, but before the taking of the Yemen, that is to say, between 557 and 570”<sup>4</sup>.

Christensen further thought that Tansar’s declaration that heretics were less harshly treated than formerly<sup>5</sup> could not be part of a third-century document, since death could not have been inflicted for apostasy before Zoroastrianism became, with Ardašīr, the strong religion of state; and he also held that the passage about naming the heir to the throne was more suitable to “the epoch between Kavād and Hōrmizd IV” than to the time of Ardašīr<sup>6</sup>.

More generally, Christensen thought that in content the *Letter*, with its strong insistence upon the merits of order, respect for rank and tradition, and submission to the state, accorded admirably with the reign of Xosrau, when the king was forced to restore order after the social and religious upheavals caused in the reign of his father by the Mazdakite movement<sup>7</sup>. Further, the strongly didactic bent of the *Letter* seemed to him to link it with the *handarz* literature (collections of gnomic sayings) known to have flourished under Xosrau. Moreover,

arguments in his *Les gestes des rois dans les traditions de l’Iran antique* (Paris, 1936), and *L’Iran sous les Sassanides* (Copenhagen, 1st edition, 1937; 2nd edition, 1944).

<sup>1</sup> See transl., below, p. 35.

<sup>2</sup> *L’Empire*, p. 112; *L’Iran* (2nd. ed.), p. 65.

<sup>3</sup> Translation, below, p. 63.

<sup>4</sup> *L’Empire*, p. 112, *L’Iran*, p. 65.

<sup>5</sup> Transl., below, p. 42.

<sup>6</sup> *L’Empire*, p. 111, *L’Iran*, p. 64.

<sup>7</sup> See in detail *Les Gestes*, p. 85 ff.

the spirit and style of the opening part of the letter proper<sup>1</sup>, where Tansar explains to Gušnasp his way of life and motives of conduct, reminded Christensen forcibly of the autobiography of Burzoe, Xosrau’s famous physician. This autobiography also was translated by Ibnu-l Muqaffa’, as the introduction to his rendering of Burzoe’s *Kalilag u Dimnag*<sup>2</sup>. Both it and the *Tansar* passage show a striking asceticism and withdrawal from the world, which is alien to Zoroastrianism (as Tansar himself is made half to acknowledge<sup>3</sup>). Nöldeke was inclined to attribute this asceticism in Burzoe to Indian influences<sup>4</sup>; but Christensen found its source in influences within 6th-century Iran itself, from Christianity, Gnosticism, Manichaeism and Mazdakism<sup>5</sup>; and he held therefore that Burzoe’s preface and the *Letter* were both in this respect typical of the reign of Xosrau.

Taking all the evidence together, Christensen came to the conclusion that the *Letter* was a “literary fiction” of the time of Xosrau, “when tradition had turned Ardašīr into the model of political wisdom and the founder of the entire organisation of the Empire”. The *Letter*, he wrote, “gives me the impression of being a historical, theological, political and ethical dissertation ... meant to instruct the contemporary (i.e. the 6th-century) reader”<sup>6</sup>. There is in fact a sentence in the *Letter* which states: “So things remained down to the time of Xosrau Anōšīrvān”<sup>7</sup>. This remark, which Darmesteter had taken as an interpolation by Ibnu-l Muqaffa’ or by Bahrām ī Xorzād<sup>8</sup>, Christensen thought was more probably a parenthetical comment by the author of the original 6th-century treatise<sup>9</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See transl., below, p. 30 ff.

<sup>2</sup> See Th. Nöldeke, *Burzoes Einleitung zu dem Buche Kalila wa Dimna, übersetzt und erläutert* (Schriften der Wissenschaftlichen Gesellschaft in Strassburg 12. Heft); a French translation of most of the preface (from Nöldeke’s German) was given by A. Christensen as an appendix to his article “La légende du sage Buzurjmīhr”, *Acta Orientalia*, VIII (1930), pp. 112–14, and is partly reproduced in his *L’Iran*, pp. 423–25.

<sup>3</sup> See transl., below, p. 32.

<sup>4</sup> See his *Burzoes Einleitung*, p. 5.

<sup>5</sup> See *L’Iran*, pp. 429–31, with citation from the contemporary Paulus Persa, *ibid.*, p. 427; cf. L. C. Casartelli, *La philosophie religieuse du mazdéisme sous les Sassanides* (Louvain, 1884), p. 1.

<sup>6</sup> *L’Empire*, p. 111; *L’Iran*, p. 63.

<sup>7</sup> See transl., below, p. 65.

<sup>8</sup> *JAs*, 1894, p. 549, n. 2.

<sup>9</sup> *Les Gestes*, p. 89.

The *Letter* had meantime been edited again, from better manuscripts<sup>1</sup>, by Mojtaba Minovi<sup>2</sup>, who gave his support to the 6th-century dating. In his preface and notes Minovi drew attention to close and interesting parallels which exist between the *Letter* and the *Testament of Ardašir* as preserved in the *Tajāribu-l Umam* of Ibn Miskawayh<sup>3</sup>. The resemblances are in places so close that it seems that there must have been some interdependence of the texts. The *Testament* purports to be the words of Ardašir to his successors, in which he bequeathes to them counsel and political wisdom. Two such *Testaments* are catalogued by Ibn an-Nadīm in his *Fihrist*<sup>4</sup>, one general and one addressed to his son Šābuhr.

In the *Fārs-Nāme*<sup>5</sup> it is said that, when Xosrau Anōšīrvān had the power firmly in his hands, he put into practice the political testaments of Ardašir. Christensen, adducing this passage, states that the *Testament of Ardašir* is undoubtedly unauthentic, giving for his reason that "the style is that of the *andarz* of the time of Xosrau I"<sup>6</sup>. Long before this, Nöldeke had firmly characterised the *Testament* as a "late, rhetorical-paraenetical work"<sup>7</sup>. The close resemblances between the *Testament* and the *Letter* served therefore to strengthen opinion that the latter was a piece of political propaganda, fabricated to justify Xosrau in his practices rather than existing to provide a basis for them.

The *Letter of Tansar* is longer than the *Testament of Ardašir* as preserved by Ibn Miskawayh. This is partly due to the insertion in the former, without any very striking relevance, of two stories of Indian origin, the purpose being, one would hazard, to sugar the rather harsh didacticism of the text<sup>8</sup>. One story is told to illustrate

the need to keep a balance in life between resignation to fate and reliance upon one's own efforts<sup>1</sup>. The protagonist, a certain king Jahtal<sup>2</sup>, has been identified with a king Yudhiṣṭira of the first Gonandīya dynasty, who lost and re-won his kingdom in Gandhāra at a date probably somewhere around 400–450 A.C., well after the reign of Ardašir. The other story is about a quarrel between a servant-girl and a ram, which results, surprisingly, in the death of a troop of monkeys<sup>3</sup>. Its moral is twofold: that the association of the ill-assorted is dangerous, and that one should not remain near those who dispute. The oldest known version of this story is a Buddhist tale translated into Chinese in 472 A.C. A more elaborate version, close to that of the *Letter*, occurs in a Chinese translation of fables from the *Mūlasarvāstivāda Vinaya*. The *Mūlasarvāstivādins* were particularly associated with Gandhāra-Kashmir; and their *Vinaya*, though known only from a comparatively late date (the seventh century onwards), is held to have been composed about the third or fourth century A.C. The story is found also in the *Book of Sindbād*, a Middle Persian work derived from an Indian original. The *Book of Sindbād* is a collection of stories within a frame-story, told for amusement and a didactic purpose. The *Tūti Nāme* and Burzoe's famous *Kalilag u Dimnag* are similar works, likewise deriving from Indian sources<sup>4</sup>. All are attributed to Xosrau's reign, and, like the fables in the *Letter*, illustrate the influence of Indian literature on 6th-century Iran.

The evidence for a 6th-century date for the *Letter* is thus considerable; and the consensus of scholarly opinion has come to be that the treatise is in fact a literary forgery perpetrated for political purposes, the prestige of the founder of the dynasty and his great *hērbad*, Tansar, being drawn on to help Xosrau to re-establish the authority

<sup>1</sup> On the manuscripts see below, pp. 23–24.

<sup>2</sup> As the *Tansar Nāme*, or the *Epistle of Tansar*, Tehran, 1932.

<sup>3</sup> See the facsimile, *Gibb Memorial Series*, (1900), p. 99 ff.; the text of the *Testament* has been printed by Deh Khoda in his *Amsāl va Hikam* (Tehran, 1931), III, p. 1613 ff.

<sup>4</sup> *Kitāb al-Fihrist*, ed. G. Flügel (Leipzig, 1871), p. 126, l. 17, p. 316, l. 1.

<sup>5</sup> Ed. G. Le Strange and R. A. Nicholson, *Gibb Memorial Series*, new series, Vol. I, 1921, p. 88.

<sup>6</sup> *Les Gestes*, p. 91. Quotations from the testament in Arabic histories, and in the *Šāhnāme*, are cited by Christensen, *op. cit.*, p. 91 ff.

<sup>7</sup> See his *Geschichte der Perser und Araber zur Zeit der Sasaniden aus der arabischen Chronik des Tabari* (Leyden, 1879), p. 21, n. 2.

<sup>8</sup> See "The Indian Fables in the *Letter of Tansar*", *Asia Major*, n.s. V i (1955), p. 50 ff.

<sup>1</sup> See transl., below, pp. 68–69.

<sup>2</sup> The reading of the name was established by Minovi, see *Asia Major*, V, i, p. 51 with n. 3.

<sup>3</sup> See transl., below, pp. 55–59.

<sup>4</sup> The story of the servant-girl and the ram is also found, as Darmester showed, in the *Pañcatantra* from which *Kalilag u Dimnag* derives; but it is not in the Arabic translation of this work by Ibnu'l Muqaffa'. Darmester therefore suggested that Ibnu'l Muqaffa' had himself taken it from the Pahlavi *Kalilag u Dimnag*, and inserted it in his translation of the *Letter*. Subsequent researches by J. Hertel and F. Edgerton have shown however that the story was not in fact part of the early *Pañcatantra* as known to Burzoe. See further *Asia Major*, loc. cit., p. 55 f.

of both state and church. (That these two are twins, born of the one womb, is strikingly stated in both the *Letter* and the *Testament*)<sup>1</sup>.

Yet though this interpretation is now widely held and well established, there are reasons for questioning its validity. To say of the *Letter* that "anachronism is general"<sup>2</sup> is to go too far. In fact most of the text is as appropriate to the reign of Ardašīr as to that of Xosrau. It is true that the Mazdakite movement brought Xosrau to the throne of a troubled land, where authority had been questioned and tradition undermined; but what of Ardašīr, who had overthrown a huge, ramshackle empire and was seeking, himself alone, to weld its parts into a unified whole? He too had much need of propaganda to persuade men of influence to submit to his rule and to accept his dictates. Tabarī in fact explicitly states that "when Ardašīr first took the field, he wrote urgent letters to the "kings of the peoples", in which he established his claim and summoned them to obey him"<sup>3</sup>. On the evidence simply of its general tenor there is therefore no cause to doubt that the *Letter* is what it purports to be, a product of Ardašīr's reign. A scholar as learned as Darmesteter was prepared to accept it as in the main authentic. It is only the existence of particular passages, which must undeniably be assigned to the later period, that has led to recognition of the fact that the general tenor of the work *also* suits the reign of Xosrau. From here some scholars have advanced to the position that it *only* suits his reign; but this further step in argument is unjustifiable.

Moreover, against this argument is the fact that there is at least one passage in the *Letter* which is appropriate to Ardašīr's reign, and to his reign alone, and whose presence cannot be explained as a piece of pragmatic fiction. This is the passage where Gušnasp makes the charge against Ardašīr that "the King of kings has taken away fires from the fire-temples, extinguished them and blotted them out". To this Tansar replies: "The truth is that after Darius each of the "kings of the peoples" built his own fire-temple. This was pure innovation,

<sup>1</sup> See transl., below, p. 33, with note 7.

<sup>2</sup> J. Gagé, *La Montée des Sassanides et l'Heure de Palmyre*, p. 264. (On pp. 263-65, M. Gagé gives a lucid summing-up of the case for the 6th-century dating of the *Letter*; and on pp. 266-78 he reproduces a large part of Darmesteter's French translation of it).

<sup>3</sup> See Nöldeke, *Tabarī*, pp. 20-21. In a footnote Nöldeke refers to the translation by Ibn'u'l Muqaffa' of Tansar's letter, which however he dismisses firmly as a "rhetorical product of the late Sasanian period" (*ibid.*, p. 21, n. 2).

introduced by them without the authority of kings of old. The King of kings has razed the temples, and confiscated the endowments, and had the fires carried back to their places of origin"<sup>1</sup>. Neither the charge nor the defence has any relevance to the reign of Xosrau, nor any value as propaganda; but they fit admirably with the time of Ardašīr, who overthrew many local rulers and seized their lands. To destroy dynastic shrines and to carry off royal fires to grow cold by his own was plainly an effective symbol of conquest. Ardašīr's bringing back of trophies to his own fire-temples is actually mentioned by Islamic authors<sup>2</sup>. Such conduct would naturally cause concern to the king of Parišwār, who presumably had his own dynastic fire.

In another passage Tansar, seeking to set Ardašīr's merits in all their brightness against a dark background, says that his predecessors "brought nothing but desolation and corruption to the world; cities became deserts, and buildings were razed. In the space of 14 years, through policy and strength and skill, he (Ardašīr) brought it about that he made water flow in every desert and established towns and created groups of villages ... He found builders and inhabitants and caused roads to be made ... Whoever considers his achievements during these 14 years ... will agree that ... the world has not known so true a king"<sup>3</sup>. As Darmesteter has pointed out, this passage has a ring of truth, supposing 14 years to be the time needed by Ardašīr to establish his dominion over the regions of the Parthian empire. His labours as a builder of cities during that time are well attested.

It could be argued that such passages serve merely to show the cleverness of the 6th-century fabricator, who thus gave verisimilitude to his work; but this is not really a satisfactory explanation. It is impossible to imagine a propagandist under Xosrau deliberately inventing the damaging accusation of razing fire-temples, and further making his puppet Tansar admit the charge. There are, moreover, a number of other charges in the *Letter* which are awkward, and difficult to rebut. As Darmesteter has said, the document embodies "un véritable acte d'accusation contre Ardašīr"<sup>4</sup>. It is not in fact the sort of document

<sup>1</sup> Transl., below, p. 47.

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., *Tabarī*, Nöldeke's transl., pp. 12, 17.

<sup>3</sup> Transl., below, p. 67.

<sup>4</sup> *JAs.*, 1894, pp. 192-93.

to be invented for the credit of the dynasty, though one can imagine its being put to use if it already existed. If, however, the putative 6th-century fabricator of the work did not invent the charges contained in it, where did he get them from? What were his sources? And why did his handling of them vary so much? Why was he clever enough to write in one place "this latter Ardašīr is of far greater worth than the Ardašīr of old", when only a few sentences before he has said: "so things remained down to the time of Xosrau Anōšīrvān"<sup>1</sup>? The theory of a literary forgery forces us to contradictory assumptions: that the fabricator was a man both clever and stupid, one gifted with historical knowledge and historical feeling, yet guilty of flagrant and foolish anachronisms; a respecter of tradition, who did not scruple to invent deliberate falsehood. There is no known parallel in Sasanian literature to reconcile us to such difficult assumptions.

What we have abundant evidence for in Middle Persian is the very different process touched upon above, whereby, under the influence of the oral tradition, texts were rehandled in transmission, being adapted to the needs and interests of each successive generation. There was not necessarily anything cynical in this process, but it was extremely far-reaching, and continued down into Islamic times. To take a single example from many, one of the best known Zoroastrian works is the *Ardāy Virāz Nāmag*, the "Book of the just Virāz"<sup>2</sup>. This describes the journey in spirit of a righteous man to heaven and hell (a well-known type of oral mantic composition). The "just Virāza" is mentioned in the Avesta, and may therefore be held to have belonged to north-eastern Iran. His story must have been transmitted by many generations, and in its surviving Pahlavi version he has been transformed into an inhabitant of Pars. In the final redaction there is an introductory chapter which is evidently partly of post-conquest date, since according to it Virāz made his spirit-journey in order to establish the efficacy of certain Zoroastrian ceremonies, which inevitably came to be attacked under Islam. It would plainly be improper, however, to call this final redaction a 9th-century literary forgery, simply because

<sup>1</sup> Transl., below, pp. 66, 65.

<sup>2</sup> Edited and translated by Martin Haug and E. W. West as *The Book of Ardā Virāz* (Bombay and London, 1872); re-edited by J. Jamasp Asa as the *Ardā Virāz Nāmeḥ* (Bombay, 1902).

in it the text was adapted for the purposes of religious propaganda at that time. Such terms are not appropriate to Middle Persian literature, which is characterised by immense conservatism tempered by free adaptations.

Some of these adaptations are purposeful, as is the introduction to the *Ardāy Virāz Nāmag*; others seem designed simply to add new knowledge and to bring a text up to date. Thus the great Middle Persian compilation, the *Bundahišn*, has for its 31st chapter a Pahlavi translation of the first chapter of an Avestan work, the *Vendidad*. The subject-matter of this goes back at least to Arsacid times; yet in it ancient Sogdia, to the north-east of Iran, is confused with Syria and is innocently and misleadingly identified with Muslim Bagdad<sup>1</sup>. The references to Turks in the *Letter* are most probably anachronisms of this kind, which are by no means uncommon in Pahlavi literature. It is chronological vagueness rather than historical fiction that one encounters in early Iran.

Other adaptations seem purely literary, intended to make a work currently fashionable and pleasing. Here again the dual influences of conservation and innovation can be seen at work, making individual texts extremely difficult to date. Christensen has made the point that *handarz* texts were popular at the time of Xosrau, and he has used this as evidence for dating both the *Letter* and the *Testament of Ardašīr*. Gnones are, however, a very ancient form of oral composition. There is evidence for the existence of an Avestan *handarz* literature<sup>2</sup>; and one can certainly assume an Old Persian one to have flourished under the Achaemenians. Most of the Middle Persian *handarz* are anonymous, but there are collections attributed to well-known kings or sages<sup>3</sup>. The sage to whom the greatest number of *handarz* are attributed is Ādurbād ī Mahraspandān, who happens to have lived in the 4th century, under Šābuhr II; one set of *handarz* he delivers as precepts he himself had learnt from his master Mihr-Ōhrmazd, who had learned them in his turn from one Ādurag (a sage mentioned again elsewhere).

<sup>1</sup> See the edition by T. D. Anklesaria (Bombay, 1908), p. 205, l. 12; the translation, called *Zand-ākāsih*, by B. T. Anklesaria (Bombay, 1956), p. 265.

<sup>2</sup> One of the 21 books of the Sasanian Avesta, the *Bariš Nask*, is said to have consisted of *handarz*; some of these probably survive in translation in Book VI of the *Dēnkard*.

<sup>3</sup> See in general S. Shaked, *The Pahlavi Andarz Literature* (doctoral thesis of London University, 1964).

This takes one well back, therefore, towards the third century for Sasanian *handarz* compositions. Other Sasanian *handarz* are simply attributed to the *porōtkēsān*, the fathers of the church. It is true that there are two Middle Persian collections of *handarz* assigned to Xosrau I, as well as many sayings preserved in Islamic writings; and that other collections of *handarz* are attributed to his subjects, Wuzargmihr and Baxt-āfrid. This does not justify an argument that the *Letter of Tansar* cannot belong to the third century because of stylistic resemblances to *handarz* literature. On the contrary, the continuous popularity of *handarz* provides a striking illustration of the conservatism of Middle Persian literature.

What does seem probable is that written prose developed greater stylistic intricacy during the period, and that the personal element (largely lacking in demonstrably early works) became more prominent as the written tradition advanced. The only elaborate autobiographical passages known from Sasanian literature, apart from the opening of Tansar's letter, are the work of two 6th-century writers, Wuzargmihr and Burzoe. It seems very probable, therefore, that this part of the *Letter* is a 6th-century extension, a concession, like the added Indian fables, to the taste and interests of the day. Lawrence Mills has justly pointed out<sup>1</sup> how ill it assorts, in its other-worldliness, with the pronounced pragmatism of most of the text. Here again, however, we are back at *particular* passages which are to be assigned to the 6th century; the text as a whole is not affected.

If the anonymous introduction to the letter proper, and all the demonstrably 6th-century passages, are excised, what remains, behind the veil of Ibn Isfandiyār's loquacity, is a short, trenchant document, which can perfectly well be a genuine letter of the third century. Reluctance to accept it as such is in part due to vague feeling, the feeling that literary correspondence does not accord with the turbulence of the first Sasanian reign, that that period is too remote and too ill-documented for a letter written then to have descended to us today. As it happens, however, letter-writing was one of the oldest uses of the pen in Iran; and letters of a much earlier period, written by Achae-

menian Persians, have survived to be read again now<sup>1</sup>. These ancient letters are brief, dry and factual; but we have also a copy of part of a long letter written in Parthian by a Manichaean dignitary of the third century A.C.<sup>2</sup>, which shows that vigorous, detailed letters were actually composed in the colloquial of that day.

Records show that Ardašīr was not only a ruthless conqueror; he was also a builder of towns and roads, a forger of unity, the founder of the empire. This was not merely a role invented for him by his descendants. Why then should we suppose that he and his *hērbad* were not capable of statesmanlike use of the written word, to avoid bloodshed and to establish concord? Why should we doubt Tabarī's clear statement to this effect? As has been pointed out, Ardašīr is not known to have conquered Tabaristān. This fact, far from telling against the authenticity of Tansar's letter, seems rather to support it. Better to woo with words a king entrenched behind northern mountains than to launch an arduous campaign against him.

As to the other feeling, that in general texts do not survive from Ardašīr's day, this is largely due to the transforming power of the transmitters. The story of the just Virāza, for example, was probably inherited by the Persians of Ardašīr's time, and passed on by them to their descendants; and some of the *handarz* attributed to sages of Xosrau's reign may well have been as long current in Pars as the Persians had been there themselves. Texts were transmitted as a river flows, changing form and yet essentially the same. Little, therefore, except sacred texts received the fixed stamp of a particular period, until late Sasanian or early Islamic days, when the flow of Middle Persian literature gradually ceased, and such texts as survive remain in the last form which they took. It is natural, therefore, to think of Xosrau's reign as productive, and that of Ardašīr as barren; natural, but probably wholly wrong.

As for the actual preservation of written texts from Ardašīr's day, Kardēr in his inscriptions refers frequently to documents which bore his own signature. These seem to have been charters and records.

<sup>1</sup> See G. R. Driver, *Aramaic Documents of the Fifth Century B.C.* (Oxford, 1954).

<sup>2</sup> See F. C. Andreas and W. Henning, *Mitteliranische Manichaica aus Chinesisch-Turkestan II* (*Sitzungsberichte d. Preussischen Akademie der Wissenschaften* 1934, XXVII), p. 857 ff., text b ii.

<sup>1</sup> See his *Zaradūštra, Philo, the Achaemenids and Israel* (Leipzig, 1905-06), p. 29. Mills was himself inclined to attribute the *Letter* to the early Islamic period.



They and documents of state were certainly preserved, and it has been suggested that the *Diz i nibišt* ("Stronghold of Writings") which housed them is the Ka'ba-yi Zardušt itself<sup>1</sup>. A copy of Tansar's letter to Gušnasp was presumably among these documents; and there is no positive reason to doubt that Ardašir also placed a written testament (or testaments) there. Both documents may be presumed to have been re-copied, with adaptations and enlargements, at the time of Xosrau, when a certain similarity in the political situation made their contents particularly apposite. The likeness between the *Letter* and the *Testament* may therefore have a twofold cause, a common origin at the court of Ardašir, and a common rehandling under Xosrau.

If the *Letter of Tansar* is accepted as having at its core an authentic document, then it is a work of very great interest, embodying one of the oldest pieces of Middle Persian writing, and throwing valuable light on the time of Ardašir. It is especially interesting for the evidence it provides for the continuity of Zoroastrianism under the Parthians, and for local resistance to Ardašir's claims<sup>2</sup>. In its enlarged form the *Letter* casts a faint but fascinating light on the literary as well as the political history of two great Sasanian reigns. It has also a more general value, for in few countries is the transition from oral to written literature so long-drawn-out, so well attested, and so complex in its interactions as in Sasanian Iran. As a written document reshaped in the tradition of oral transmission (in which authorship has little importance, and texts become common property), the *Letter* provides an interesting illustration of a stage in this great change in man's development<sup>3</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> See Henning, "The Inscription of Naqš-i Rostam", introduction.

<sup>2</sup> It is clear that, to the Zoroastrian Gušnasp, Ardašir's vaunted "restoration" of the Faith was in some respects merely an overthrowing of traditions and established observances. This Tansar in part admits, defending however the changes introduced by Ardašir as a return to more ancient ways (see especially below, p. 37). As Darmesteter comments, the plea of restoring the primitive faith was an excellent excuse for altering actual practices. Tansar also admits that occasionally Ardašir did away with "some tyranny of the men of old which is not well for this age and time" (below, p. 36). Gušnasp's protests suggest that in fact by his "reform" Ardašir offended in some respects old Parthian orthodoxy, rather than re-establishing Zoroastrianism in a heathen void, as is commonly suggested by Sasanian writers.

<sup>3</sup> While the present work was in the press, a Danish translation, made from Minovi's edition, was published under the title *Tansar's Brev* (Copenhagen, 1965) by Hertha Kirketerp-Møller, who in her historical introduction follows Christensen in regarding the

### *The manuscripts and editions*

J. Darmesteter based his edition of the *Letter of Tansar*, published in the *Journal asiatique* for 1894, on a ms. of the *Tarix-i Tabaristān* belonging to the India Office Library, London, namely ms. 1134, dated A.H. 1032 (1632 A.C.), which he collated with a British Museum ms., *Addenda* no. 7633, dated A.H. 1067 (1656 A.C.). In transcribing these mss. he had the initial help of three of his former students (Ahmed-Bey Agaëff, M. Paul Ottavi and M. Fertet). These two mss. were the only ones available to him, but he pointed out the likelihood that better ones existed. In the subsequent *tirage à part* of his edition, Darmesteter made a few small additions to the notes, and added some references.

When E. Herzfeld visited Persia in 1926, he took among his books a copy of Darmesteter's edition. This attracted the attention of Mojtaba Minovi, one of the young Persian scholars who studied with Herzfeld, to whom he lent the work to copy. Minovi subsequently lent his copy of Darmesteter's text and textual notes to Deh Khoda, who reproduced the text in his *Amsāl va Hikam* (Tehran, 1931), Vol. III, pp. 1621-40.

Minovi later collated Darmesteter's text with a transcription made for 'Abbas Iqbal of a ms. of the *Tarix-i Tabaristān* dated about A.H. 970 (1562 A.C.). This ms. proved to contain, not only valuable variant readings, but also whole passages absent from the two mss. available to Darmesteter. The transcription of it was accordingly used by Minovi as the basis for a new edition of the text, published by him

*Letter* as a fictive work of the 6th century. In 1967 a long article appeared in the *Journal asiatique*, 1966, i, pp. 1-142, by M. Grignaschi, devoted to the edition and translation (with commentary) of several short Arabic treatises of Sasanian origin, contained in the Turkish ms. Köprülü 1608. These make a valuable addition to known Sasanian secular literature. Among them is a version of the *Testament of Ardašir*.

Grignaschi has no reservations about dating both the *Testament* and its companion-work, the *Letter of Tansar*, to the reign of the last Sasanian king, Yazdigird III, regarding them as being "the survivors of a polemic on how to restore the Sasanian state, ruined by the civil wars of the beginning of the 7th century" (p. 9). This analysis suffers both from too cursory a consideration of the texts themselves, and from treating them in isolation from the rest of Middle Persian literature. For a general discussion of the interaction of oral and written traditions within the period see the present writer's contribution on Middle Persian literature in the *Handbuch der Orientalistik* (ed. B. Spuler) Abt. I, Bd. IV, ii (1968), which has been in the press since 1959.

as the *Tansar Nāme* in Tehran in 1932. In this edition Minovi gave the variants from the two London mss.; he also translated Darmesteter's notes into Persian, and added notes of his own. Among the latter he included some verbal communications from Deh Khoda, who in transcribing the text had become versed in the style and idiom of Ibn Isfandiyār.

After his edition had been published, Minovi obtained access to the ms.-original of Iqbal's transcription. This ms. had previously belonged to Mu'tasim al-Saltaneh, but by then had passed to its present possessor, Hajji Muḥammad Ramaḍani, owner of the Khāvar printing-press in Tehran. A comparison of this 10th century ms. with its transcription showed that a number of misreadings and copying-mistakes had crept into the latter.

At the same time Minovi was able to examine a ms. of the 11th century A.H. (A.H. 1003), belonging to 'Abbas Iqbal. This he found to agree fairly closely with the London manuscripts.

In 1942 Iqbal published in Tehran the major part of the *Tarix-i Tabaristān*, basing the text on the 10th century ms. belonging to Ramaḍani (which he called A), and giving variant readings from his own 11th century ms. (which he called B), and from other manuscripts. In his preface he pointed out that, of the numerous mss. of the *Tarix-i Tabaristān* known to him, all except A and B are later than the eleventh century and derive from a single defective copy.

The publication of the text of the *Tarix-i Tabaristān* was a major undertaking, and a full apparatus of variants was not given throughout. It happens that in the case of the *Letter of Tansar* there are occasional divergences between readings given by Iqbal and the independent readings of Minovi; these appear to occur chiefly through Iqbal's incorporation, without comment, into his text of more acceptable readings from mss. other than A.

In the academic session 1949-1950 Minovi collaborated with W. B. Henning at the School of Oriental and African Studies, London, to hold a seminar on Persian texts relating to the pre-Islamic period. One of the texts then read was the *Letter of Tansar*, from Minovi's own edition with corrections supplied verbally by him from his subsequent study of ms. A. This seminar the present writer was privileged to attend. Professor Minovi had originally planned an English translation to accompany his Persian edition; but, on the principle that

it is better to translate into rather than out of one's mother-tongue, he then suggested that I undertook this instead. A draft of the present translation was accordingly made at that time.

In the translation which follows the page-numbers of Minovi's edition have been set in the margin for ease of reference. In the notes Minovi's new readings from ms. A are given, to explain divergences between the translation and the printed text. These will be found to coincide generally with Iqbal's readings in his edition of the *Tarix-i Tabaristān*, which are cited only where they differ from Minovi's. Many of Darmesteter's original notes, sometimes translated and condensed, are given over the initial (D.). I have further, with their permission, reproduced in my own words some of the observations made during the seminar by Professor Henning and Professor Minovi. These are marked by the initials (H.) and (M.). Any inaccuracies occurring in these notes must be attributed to the present writer; conversely any merits which the translation may have are to be ascribed largely to these two eminent scholars, with whom, together, it was a rare privilege to work. The opinions expressed in this introduction about the dating of the text are wholly my own, evolved during the intervening years.

## TANSAR'S LETTER TO GUŠNASP

This is the account given by Ibnu-l Muqaffa' on the authority of Bahrām son of Xorzād, who spoke on the authority of his father Manūčīhr, mobad of Xorāsān, and that of learned men of Pars<sup>1</sup>.

When Alexander had taken the field in the region of the west and the Greek realms<sup>2</sup> (an event too famous to need recounting) and had received the submission of Copts and Berbers<sup>3</sup> and Jews, then he led his army from there into Iran and joined battle with Darius. A band of Darius' own nobles used guile<sup>4</sup> and treachery to behead him and brought the head to Alexander, who commanded that those men be nailed to trees as targets and used as butts for arrows<sup>5</sup>, this being the manner of Greek justice; and he had it proclaimed: "This is the reward for him who dares to kill a king"<sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> This opening statement has a general resemblance to those in the colophons of Pahlavi books (see Darmesteter *JAs.*, 1894, 190-91). Some sheets are unfortunately missing from MS. A of the *Tarix-i Tabaristān* (see Minovi, 2 n. 1; Iqbal, intro., pp. ح-د), which included the opening of the *Letter*. There are no variants in the other MSS. to show why two names (Xorzād and Manūčīhr) are given for Bahrām's father, see further above, intro., p. 4, n. 1.

Ibn Isfandiār appears to use the name *Pārs* for Persia proper, that is, for the modern province known now, by the Arabicised form of its ancient name, as *Fārs*. The form *Fārs* he seems to use synonymously with the term *Irānšahr* for greater Persia, that is to say, for approximately the area forming modern Iran. In this translation *Pārs* is rendered by *Pars*, *Fārs* and *Irānšahr* are both translated as *Iran*.

<sup>2</sup> For Greece Ibn Isfandiār regularly uses the word *Rūm* i.e. Rome, since Greece became part of the later Eastern Roman Empire. (The word *Rūm* is generally rendered in this translation by "Greece", but on page 63 "Rome" i.e. the Roman Empire has been kept, as more appropriate).

<sup>3</sup> By "Berbers" are to be understood the inhabitants of the districts around modern Berbera (see Darmesteter, *Études iraniennes*, II, 221-24).

<sup>4</sup> The word *'abiyat* "arranging" is elsewhere used by Ibn Isfandiār for "cunning, stratagem", e.g. *Tarix-i Tabaristān* 60<sup>15</sup> (H.).

<sup>5</sup> This translation is based on a reading by Deh Khoda, who emended شق being Turkish for "gourd". Gourds were used for butts in archery-practice, and the word developed the secondary meaning of "butt" in general, see J. A. Vullers, *Lexicon persico-latinum*, s.v. فاق (M.).

<sup>6</sup> This statement belongs to legend, since Alexander meted out no punishment for the killing of Darius (see W. W. Tarn, *Alexander The Great* [Cambridge, 1948] I, 61, 70).

When the king had seized Iran all the princes and descendants<sup>1</sup> of the nobility and the leaders and rulers and provincial aristocracy gathered in his presence. Their splendour and numbers troubled him, and he wrote a letter to his minister, Aristotle:

"By the grace of great and glorious God our fortunes have prospered thus far. I wish to go to India and China and the farthest East, but fear to leave alive these Persian nobles, lest they create troubles in my absence which it will be hard to remedy, and come to Greece to do harm to our land. It seems prudent to me to destroy them all, (2) that I may carry out my purpose with untroubled mind".

Aristotle wrote the following answer:<sup>2</sup>

"Truly the peoples of each<sup>3</sup> of the world's climes are distinguished by some excellence, some talent and some dignity which those of other climes do not possess. The people of Pars are pre-eminent for courage and boldness and skill on the day of battle, qualities which form one of the mightiest tools of empire and instruments of power. If you destroy them, you will have overthrown one of the greatest pillars of excellence in the world. Moreover, when the noble among them<sup>4</sup> have gone, you will be forced<sup>5</sup> of necessity to promote the base to the same ranks and stations. Be assured that there is no wickedness or calamity, no unrest or plague in the world which corrupts so much as the ascending of the base to the station of the noble. Beware! turn aside the bridle of your intent from this purpose, and in the perfection of your understanding sever the tongue of calumny, which is sharper and more cruel than the deadly spear; that the rule and religion of

<sup>1</sup> Or "survivors". The Persian is ambiguous.

<sup>2</sup> The defective MS. A begins here, with Arabic words meaning literally: ... the base to the high places. Then turn away from this idea. There follow (in Persian) the words: The meaning of that is, Truly the peoples ... etc. Evidently in A Aristotle's letter was preserved in Arabic as well as Persian (see Minovi, Tehran ed., p. 2, n. 1). What survives of the Arabic shows how greatly Ibn Isfandiār has inflated his original. Cf. also the parallel, but much briefer, account of the conquest of Persia and Aristotle's letter given in the *Fārs Nāme* (ed. G. Le Strange and R. A. Nicholson, *Gibb Memorial Series*, 57-8), which was probably also taken from the Arabic "Letter of Tansar"; see A. Christensen, *Acta Orientalia*, X (1932), 50-54.

<sup>3</sup> هر, not هر A.

<sup>4</sup> بزرگان ایشان A.

<sup>5</sup> A 2nd pers. sg. بای is found fairly frequently in Ibn Isfandiār's writings (see Minovi, p. 49).

fair fame be not erased for the sake of tranquillity of mind during this brief span of life, which is unsure and lacks both truth and certainty. *Man is but a tale told after him: be then a sweet tale for him remembering it.*

- (3) Were your earthly span to last three hundred years  
Account but as a tale your days unnumbered.  
And since you must become a tale, O wise man,  
Be at the least a good tale, not an ill one.

You must make the heads of their first families and their men of rank and their lords and nobles rely upon your position and patronage, your sincerity and bounty; and through favours and kindnesses you must banish the causes of vexation and care from their hearts. For the ancients have said that no matter of moment will be brought about by force and harshness which cannot be accomplished by clemency and kindness. The best course is to divide the realm of Iran among their princes, and to bestow throne and crown on whomsoever you appoint<sup>1</sup> to any province; giving none<sup>2</sup> precedence, ascendancy or authority over another, that each may be absolute<sup>3</sup> on the throne of his own domain. For the title of king is a great pride, and none wearing a crown is ready to pay tribute to another, or to humble himself before any man. There will appear among them so much disunity and variance and presumption and haughtiness, so much<sup>4</sup> opposition and rivalry about power, so much bragging and vaunting about wealth, so much contention over degree, and so much ruffling and wrangling over retainers, that they will have no leisure to seek vengeance upon you<sup>5</sup>, and being occupied one with another will not be free to think upon the past<sup>6</sup>. Were you at the farthest bounds of earth each would menace his fellow with your dread, invoking your power and support. Thus there would be security for you and for those who follow after you, even though the world is lacking in security and trust”.

<sup>1</sup> پدید کنی, translated by D. as “tu découvris”, means “you shall appoint”. It is an idiosyncrasy of Ibn Isfandiār’s to use پدید آوردن and پدید کردن for “appoint” (see Minovi, citing Deh Khoda, p. 49); cf. the Pahlavi legal term *paydāg kardan* “to devise”.

<sup>2</sup> کس, supplied by M. in his edition, is present in A.

<sup>3</sup> A has مستند, but M. prefers to read مستبد (with the British Museum MS.).

<sup>4</sup> چندان تقاطع A.

<sup>5</sup> تو, supplied by M., is present in A.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. the beginning of the Pahlavi text *Ardāy Virāz Nāmag* (D.).

When Alexander perceived the tenor of this answer, he<sup>1</sup> adopted the course which Aristotle advised. He divided the land of the Persians<sup>(4)</sup> among their princes, who became known as the “kings of the peoples”<sup>2</sup>; and he led his army away from that clime into the farthest East. In pursuit of what had been granted him by the King of all kings he subdued mankind and took captive the world. After fourteen years he returned, and on reaching the land of Babylon he parted from all he had taken, and himself departed this life.

We look upon the world and it is worth nothing;  
The whole kingdom of earth is worth not one farthing.

His army, which had been clustered like the Pleiades, became scattered like the stars of the Bear. He was not yet laid to earth before his soldiers sped like the wind to their own lands. Fortune dispersed this great assembly and scattered the wealth amassed. Day followed night, and the play of vicissitudes continued on.

Long afterwards Ardašir son of Pāpak, son of Sāsān, took the field. At that time the two Irāqs<sup>3</sup> and the Māhs (Māh Nihāvand and Māh Bastām) and Māsabadhān<sup>4</sup> were ruled over by Ardavān, greatest and most powerful of the “kings of the peoples”. Ardašir seized him together with ninety other descendants of kings enthroned by Alexander. Some he put to death by the sword, others through captivity.

Apart from<sup>5</sup> Ardavān, the man of most might and dignity at the time was Gušnasp<sup>6</sup>, king of Pārsiśwār<sup>7</sup> and Tabaristān. Since Gušnasp’s forbears had retaken the land of Pārsiśwār by force and arms

<sup>1</sup> [اورا] is grammatically necessary before رای (M.).

<sup>2</sup> In the Pahlavi text the *Greater Bundahišn*, ed. T. D. Anklesaria, p. 214<sup>8</sup> ff., Alexander is said to have divided Iran among 90 rulers. Cf. below, where Ardašir the Sasanian is said to have seized 90 descendants of these kings (D.).

<sup>3</sup> i.e. the Arab Irāq and the Persian Irāq (D.).

<sup>4</sup> The name *Māsabadhān*, the *Mesobadene* of Pliny, appears in the Persian text, by analogical corruption, as *Māh Sabadhān*. Māh < Māda, i.e. parts of ancient Media (D.).

<sup>5</sup> گزشت از A.

<sup>6</sup> Mas’ūdi (*Kitāb ut-Tanbih wa’l-Itrāf*, ed. J. de Goeje 992 ff., 1001<sup>1</sup>) gives the king’s name as *Māh-Gušnasp* (see J. Marquart, *Erānšahr*, p. 126).

<sup>7</sup> پارسوار A (Minovi, p. 51; Iqbal gives, without comment, فندوارگر). In the Arabic-Persian tradition the name is usually spelt with initial *fr-*; but the reading *Pārsiśwār* accords with the earliest mention of the name. Strabo gave the name *παγαξοδῆγας* to the moun-

from Alexander's lieutenants, and since they had adhered to the faith and party of the kings of Pars, Ardašīr treated him with lenience, sending no army to his land, but showing forbearance and kindness in the place of haste, that matters might not come to strife and conflict. When it became clear to Gušnasp, king of Tabaristān, that he could not avoid submitting and paying fealty, he wrote a letter to Tansar<sup>1</sup>, chief herbad (5) of Ardašīr son of Pāpak. (Bahrām ī Xorzād has said that he was called *Tansar* because<sup>2</sup> all his limbs were covered with such thick, long hair that it was as if<sup>3</sup> his whole body [*tan*] were head [*sar*]). Tansar read the letter of the king of Tabaristān and wrote the answer which follows:

The chief herbad<sup>4</sup>, Tansar, has received the letter of Gušnasp, prince and king of Tabaristān and Pāšwār, of Gīlān and Dēlamān

tain-range extending from Armenia through Media roughly to the Tejend. In Šāpur's inscription on the *Ka'ba-yi Zardušt*, Parthian version, line 2, these words occur: *W hmk pryšhr TWR m'd wrkn mrgw hryw* i.e. "and all the Pāšwār mountain, (namely) Media, Hyrcania, Marw and Herat". The Greek version, line 3, has: *ὅλον τὸ περσικόν ὄρος...*. The Parthian usage agrees exactly with Strabo's of over two centuries earlier; nor do the two forms of the word differ greatly, since a different first member of the compound (*pari/para*) would preserve an original *s* variously as *š* or *h*. In the eighth century A. C. Theophanes mentions a *φαρασαγόραν* (presumably to be read *φαρασάγαν* - for Pāšwār-) as son of king Kobād. Book Pahlavi has the form *pyšw'rgr* (*Pādīšwārgar*), which is usually analysed to mean the district "around Xwār", Xwār being a not very important place in Tabaristān; but Marquart has suggested that the Pahlavi may be a "translation" of the name recorded by Strabo, applied in later times to a more limited area (see his *Ērānšahr*, p. 130, n. 2). In the present passage, unless Pāšwār were used of the greater area, it would be redundant. The use of the name Pādīšwārgar at the beginning of the second chapter of *Tarix-i Tabaristān* is perplexing; but if the other countries there named are all distinct from Pādīšwārgar, Pādīšwārgar itself may in that place mean only the mountain-chain running south-east from Demāvand (H.).

<sup>1</sup> On Tansar/Tōsar see above, intro., pp. 7-8. Darmesteter tried to justify the absurd explanation of the priest's name which follows here by supposing that *تسر* was originally spelt with *tsādid* i.e. that it was properly *tnsr* < \**tanu. varəsō* "body-hair", and in his translation he accordingly rendered the name as *Tannasar*. This form was adopted by Marquart and by West; but rightly rejected by Christensen (*Acta Orientalia*, X, 47 with n. 5) as a vain attempt to justify popular etymology.

<sup>2</sup> برای آن A (M.); این (Iqbal).

<sup>3</sup> The copy of A has a doubtful reading, conjectured by Deh Khoda to be *پنداشتی* (Minovi, p. 5, n. 1). From A itself Minovi now reads *پنی*, as does Iqbal. All other MSS. have a slightly different set of words.

<sup>4</sup> هرید هراده A (M.).

and Rōyān<sup>1</sup> and Dumbāvand. He has read it, and sends his greetings and salutations. He has studied each point, good or bad, in the letter, and is pleased with it. Some things were just, others went astray; but he hopes that what is sound will be strengthened and that what is unsound will be cured.

As for this, that you have prayed for me and praised me, happy is the man who deserves the praise he gets<sup>2</sup> and happy he whose prayers are answered. Yet truly men will offer up prayers for you, who are a king and a king's son, more than for me<sup>3</sup>, and will wish for your advancement as for mine<sup>4</sup>.

In your letter you said that your father held me, Tansar, in respect and esteem, and followed my counsel in affairs of state. He has departed this life, leaving none behind him closer to him and to his children than myself (may his soul in truth be eternal, and his memory (6) endure). He showed me honour<sup>5</sup> and respect, esteem and regard beyond my deserts and lived tranquilly through following<sup>6</sup> my advice and counsel, and that of other true and steadfast ministers. Had your father lived to see this day and these events, where you have delayed and dallied he, being well advised, would have led the way, and where you have hung back, he would have sprung forward and made haste. But since you have come to consult me and honour me by seeking my advice, understand that my way of life is known of all men. It is not hidden from any, wise or ignorant, men of substance or the populace, that for fifty years past I have by austerities induced my carnal nature to refrain from the delights of wedded love and passion, from the acquisition of wealth and from the company of men. I did not desire these things in my heart, nor do I wish ever to desire them. I live as a prisoner and captive in this world, that people may recognise my equity; and to this end, that when they seek counsel of me concerning

<sup>1</sup> Rōyān was in ancient times attached, as a separate district, to the kingdom of Dēlam, and was not incorporated in Tabaristān until the eighth century A. C. (see Marquart, *Ērānšahr*, p. 136). Henning points out that Darmesteter's identification of Rōyān with Avestan *Raoidhita* is not acceptable, since the latter word occurs only once (*Yasht* XIX, 2) as an adjective for a mountain in a different locality.

<sup>2</sup> چون تویی (supplied in the Tehran ed.) is to be deleted as unnecessary (M.).

<sup>3</sup> Or "more than I do".

<sup>4</sup> Or "as I do".

<sup>5</sup> از تعظیم (not تنظیم) A (M.).

<sup>6</sup> بر طاعت A (M.).

probity of life and happiness hereafter and the avoidance of sin, and receive guidance from me, they may not suspect my motives, nor think that I am busied with cozenage and fraud for worldly ends, nor imagine any artifice. All this space of time that I have lived withdrawn from what is loved of earthly things, and have found my rest in what is hated of them, my intent was this, that were I to entreat any man to piety and good acts, to virtue and felicity, he should assent, not rejecting my counsel with rebellious spirit. So was it that your august father, after ninety years of life and kingship in Tabaristān, listened to my words with a receptive ear, there being no room for doubt within our friendship.

- (7) My purpose in so describing to you my habit and way of life, which is not a course and counsel devised by me myself – for what audacity that would be in me, to presume to hold unlawful things concerning women and wine and pleasure, which our religion holds to be lawful! For he who considers the lawful to be unlawful is one with him who considers the unlawful to be lawful. No, this rule and way of life was received from men who were fathers of the Faith, possessed of understanding and vision and certainty, as such-an-one and such-an-one, disciples of former leaders and sages of the time of Darius. These men saw corruptions and heard uttered the insolence of fools and churls; they witnessed the loss and lessening of regard and reverence for the learned by the ignorant, and the vanishing of all sense of values and of discrimination<sup>1</sup>. They saw the customs of men abandoned and the nature of beasts adopted; and for shame, lest they become companions and intimates of barbaric men, they carried their griefs into the desert, and fleeing from fox-like knavery found peace with the panther and wild goat. They wholly abandoned the world and cast off its fiercely-tormenting<sup>2</sup> desires, proposing to themselves war upon their carnal selves, patience and the endurance of affliction and the drinking of cups of unrequited longing<sup>3</sup>, choosing thus to destroy the carnal man for the sake of the soul's salvation; even as it is said in the Torah: "To flee the fool is to draw near unto God".

<sup>1</sup> تميز in the Tehran ed. is a printer's error for تميز (M.).

<sup>2</sup> Note 5 on p. 7 in the Tehran ed. is to be deleted. تبات is clear from MS. A (M.).

<sup>3</sup> نامی in the Tehran ed. is a printer's error for نامی (M.).

"Have compassion on two men alone,  
Know none more wretched and hapless than they.  
One the wise man, who knows the good,  
Neglected by the world, helpless in the hands of fools,  
The other the king who through darkened fortune  
Falls from royal power to beggary".

The king and prince of the world knows that the sages call him a high-minded sovereign who pays more heed<sup>1</sup> to the good of future times (8) than to the sorrows of his own, that he may have fair fame in this world and the hereafter<sup>2</sup>. Thus one of the kings of Iran said to the Xāqān<sup>3</sup>: "Today have I taken vengeance of the Turk for a hundred years to come". Every king who abandons the rational laws of rulership for the sake of his own immediate pleasure, saying: "the ill effects of this act will not appear for another hundred years; and since I shall not live to see that day, I will not neglect<sup>4</sup> my proper satisfaction now", should bethink him always that the lifetime<sup>5</sup> of future generations – even though, as he says, they may be his great-grandchildren only – will be longer than the days he himself has before him and the length of time for pondering more enduring.

I have written this much about my own affairs that you may realize that anyone who seeks my counsel does me thereby<sup>6</sup> a kindness. If my words move him then I rejoice, for this is my one source of joy within this world; and no king upon earth nor any man of might can do me any other favour or add another joy to this. Do not marvel at my zeal and ardour for promoting order in the world, that the foundations of the laws of the Faith may be made firm. For Church and State were born of the one womb, joined together<sup>7</sup> and never to be

<sup>1</sup> گوش داشتن (چیزی را) has the idiomatic meaning "to be aware of, consider, care for, protect (some thing)", see Minovi, Tehran ed. p. 53 with citations.

<sup>2</sup> Similar expressions occur in the Avesta, cf. *Yasna*, 62.6 (D.).

<sup>3</sup> The passage from "Thus one of the kings of Iran ..." down to "time for pondering more enduring" is peculiar to MS. A. The mention in it of Turks is anachronistic, see above, intro., pp. 12, 19.

<sup>4</sup> The reading of MS. A is فرو نگذارم (Minovi). Iqbal gives only نگذارم.

<sup>5</sup> MS. A has زمان according to Minovi, زبان according to Iqbal. Minovi suggests the emendation زمان, upon which the translation given here is based.

<sup>6</sup> همچنانست A.

<sup>7</sup> This translation is based on the reading دوسیده, found in all MSS. but A, and printed

sundered. Virtue and corruption, health and sickness are of the same nature for both. I take more delight in my own understanding and judgment and reflective powers than a rich man does in his wealth or a father in his children; and my pleasure in the fruits of the intellect is greater than pleasure in wine and music<sup>1</sup> and sports and pastimes. For I have various kinds of pleasure. One is in just conceptions upon which I can rely, and of which each day and night I see the fruits, as in (9) the emergence of order after depravity and of truth after delusion. A second is that the spirits of the virtuous dead rejoice in my understanding and wisdom and achievements<sup>2</sup>. It is as if I heard their voices uttering praise, and saw the gladness and radiance of their countenances. The third is that I know very soon there will be perfect fellowship between my soul and the souls<sup>3</sup> of my ancestors. When we are united we shall speak of what we have done and be glad. So let the king and king's son understand that the course which I take with the common people is directed by generosity and kindness only.

As for your especial case, my counsel to you is to take horse and come with crown and throne to the king's court. Know and understand that a crown is what *he* sets upon your head, and a realm is that which *he* entrusts to you; for you have heard how he has acted towards all who have received from him crown and realm. Qābūs, king of Kermān<sup>4</sup>, was of their number. He came obedient and submissive to do homage to the beneficent threshold, and was permitted to kiss the exalted carpet. He resigned crown and throne, whereupon the king said to his priests: "We had not purposed to bestow the title of king upon any man within the land of our fathers. But it has so befallen that Qābūs has sought refuge with us, and we have made a new resolve<sup>5</sup>. Because of the regard and amity in which we have held

without comment by Iqbal. MS. A has دونه (M.). On the meaning of دونه see Minovi, Tehran ed., pp. 53-4. With the whole sentence Minovi compares the Arabic phrase الدين والملك توأمان "church and state are twins" from the *Testament of Ardašir* (facsimile ed., p. 102; Deh Khoda, *Amsāl va Hikam*, p. 1614).

<sup>1</sup> The reading غنا, suggested in the Tehran ed., is found in A (M.).

<sup>2</sup> This statement concerning the *fravašis* is strikingly Zoroastrian.

<sup>3</sup> At Minovi's suggestion, a variant reading, روح مرا با ارواح, has been translated instead of ارواح با ارواح of A. The variant reading is given in his text without comment by Iqbal.

<sup>4</sup> On this reference to the king of Kermān, see above, intro., p. 11.

<sup>5</sup> رای (راهی in the Tehran ed. is a printer's error) (M.).

him, we do not desire to deprive him of aught<sup>1</sup>. To his felicity and fair fortune we add the blessing of crown and throne. Moreover if any man come submissively before us, seeking to walk upright upon the highway of obedience, we shall not deprive him of the title of king<sup>2</sup>. No other man, not being of our house, shall be called king, but<sup>3</sup> the Lords of the Marches — of Alān and the western region<sup>4</sup>, of Xwārezm and Kābul. We shall not make kingship hereditary, as we have made (10) other dignities<sup>5</sup>. The princes shall all in turn attend at court but hold no office; for if they seek office, they will begin to quarrel and contend and wrangle among themselves, and so lose their dignity and become contemptible in the common sight. What say you in this matter? If this course is acceptable, pray approve it. If not, make known what should be done". Since introduction and conclusion of this proposition were linked by what was salutary and satisfactory, it was approved, and Qābūs was dismissed. I have said this much, because your royal self sought to have your proper course made swiftly known. You must hasten your decision, without deliberation, and come speedily to do homage, lest it end in your being sought out and disgrace accruing, and your children becoming despised, and yourself visited by the wrath of the King of kings; and lest the hope we have in you today,

<sup>1</sup> آریه in p. 9, l. 13 of the Tehran ed. yields no sense, and has been omitted in translation. Henning suggests that it may have been borrowed, by a copyist's error, from p. 9, l. 15. In this case the mistake must be an old one, since it is found in A and generally.

<sup>2</sup> "Le Roi des Rois (*Šāhanshāh*) laisse le titre de Roi (*šāh*) aux chefs des dynasties locales existantes qui le reconnaissent. On trouvera dans Ibn Khurdadhbīh la liste complète des princes auxquels Ardašir laissa le titre de šāh. Dans le nombre se trouve le titre de Kirmān-šāh" (D.). The vassal-kings of the Sasanians are discussed by A. Christensen, *L'Empire des Sassanides*, pp. 21-23; *L'Iran sous les Sassanides*, 2nd ed., 1944, pp. 101-3.

<sup>3</sup> آن جماعت را A, with additional را (M.).

<sup>4</sup> Arabised in the MSS. as Allān, with *tašdid*. Christensen (*L'Empire*, p. 112; *L'Iran* p. 371 with n. 6) identifies this area with the "*marche alano-khazare*" and compares a passage from the *Nihāyatu-l Irab* (see E. G. Browne, *Journal of the Royal Asiatic Society*, 1900, p. 227) where Xosrau I is said to have accorded certain privileges to a newly-appointed *marzbān* in Armenia; see further G. Widengren "Xosrau Anōšurvān, les Hephtalites et les peuples turcs", *Orientalia Suecana*, I, 1952, pp. 92-3. Marquart in discussing this passage (*Ērānsfār*, pp. 47-8 and p. 48, n. 1) does not distinguish between hereditary kingships and the marcher-lordships.

<sup>5</sup> "Il s'agit sans doute des princes de la famille du Roi des Rois, non des dynasties locales". (D.). In *Nihāyatu-l Irab* (see *loc. cit.*) the descendants of the *marzbān* appointed by Xosrau in Armenia are said to have kept "till today", the title of "king of the throne".

we cannot have tomorrow, and lest you leave the place of willing obedience for that of enforced submission.

Now<sup>1</sup> as for the questions which you put concerning the decrees of the King of kings: some, you said, are not displeasing, but others, you asserted, cannot be justified. My answer is this: you wrote that "although the king seeks the truth of the ancients, yet he may be accused of forsaking tradition<sup>2</sup>; and right though this may be for the world, it is not good for the Faith". But you must realize that there are two traditions, the tradition of the ancients and that of the moderns<sup>3</sup>. The tradition of the ancients was equity; but the path of equity has been so far obliterated that, if in this age you summon a man to equity<sup>4</sup>, his ignorance makes him marvel and hold it impossible. The tradition of the moderns is violence. Men have been so accustomed to tyranny (11) that they cannot find a way from the injury of tyranny to the benefit of superior equity, and to the altering of it; so that were the moderns to introduce equity, it would be said: "It is not fit for these times", and for this reason the memory and imprints of equity have vanished. If on the other hand the King of kings annuls some tyranny of the men of old which is not well for this age and time, then is it said: "This is the custom of yore and usage of the ancients". You must recognize the truth that one must strive to alter the effects of injustice whether of the ancients or the moderns — it being a principle that injustice is not to be lauded, whatever the period, ancient or modern, in which it was or is being perpetrated. The present King of kings is empowered to do this and to change and erase the effects of tyranny<sup>5</sup>, and the Faith is his ally; for we see that he is more richly endowed with virtues than the ancients and that his custom is better than the customs of old.

<sup>1</sup> The main part of the letter proper begins here.

<sup>2</sup> This translation is Minovi's, who takes برنگه... گفتن to mean "to accuse of abandoning"; Henning understands the phrase to mean rather "to abandon".

<sup>3</sup> "La loi dans sa pureté primitive et la loi des temps présents, ce que l'Avesta appelle *païroyō* *ṭkaēšō* et *aparō* *ṭkaēšō* (*Zend-Avesta*, III, p. xxix, et p. 197, n. ad 717). L'*aparō* *ṭkaēšō* est la loi de fait du jour, telle que l'ont faite l'oubli et la corruption de l'ancienne loi et les nécessités historiques" (D.).

<sup>4</sup> عادل is here equivalent to به عدل, and not to عادل (M.).

<sup>5</sup> The *تادر* supplied here in the Tehran ed. is to be cut out. Minovi now regards the construction (with *مسلط* governing both *بر او* and *بر تغییر* etc.) as clumsy but adequate.

If your concern is for religious matters, and you deny that any justification is found in religion, know that Alexander burnt the book of our religion — 1200 ox-hides — at Istaxr<sup>1</sup>. One third of it was known by heart and survived, but even that was all legends and traditions, and men knew not the laws and ordinances; until, through the corruption of the people of the day and the decay of royal power and the craving for what was new and counterfeit and the desire for vainglory, even those legends and traditions dropped out of common recollection, so that not an iota of the truth of that book remained. Therefore the faith must needs be restored by a man of true and upright judgment<sup>2</sup>. Yet have you heard tell of, or seen, any monarch save the King of kings, who has taken this task upon him? With the vanishing of religion you have lost also the knowledge of genealogies and histories (12) and lives of great men, which you have let pass from memory. Some of it you have recorded<sup>3</sup> in books, some upon stones and walls, until none of you remembers what happened in the days of his father. How then can you recall the affairs of the people at large and the lives of kings and above all the knowledge of religion, which ends only with the end of the world? In the beginning of time men enjoyed perfect understanding of the knowledge of religion and sure steadfastness<sup>4</sup>. Yet it is not to be doubted that even then, through new happenings in their midst, they had need of a ruler of understanding; for till religion is interpreted by understanding it has no firm foundation.

Next, you wrote that "the King of kings demands of men earnings and work"<sup>5</sup>. Know that according to our religion men are divided

<sup>1</sup> The *از* supplied before *کاب* in the Tehran ed. is to be cut out as unnecessary; on the other hand, the word *گار*, supplied there, is present in MS. A (M.). On the Pahlavi tradition concerning the transmission and burning of the Avesta see H. W. Bailey, *Zoroastrian Problems in the Ninth-Century Books* (Oxford, 1943), p. 149 ff.; Minovi, Tehran ed., pp. 54-5, cites further passages from Arabic and Persian books in which this tradition is preserved.

<sup>2</sup> As Darmesteter dryly points out, given all this loss, it would have been less a question of restoring than of recreating the faith. Tansar plainly exaggerates grossly, both to emphasize the magnitude of Ardašīr's task, and to stress the freedom of action to which he was entitled. There are no doubt also enlargements by Ibn Isfandiār.

<sup>3</sup> *نویسد* A; *نویسد* (Tehran ed.) is a misprint (M.).

<sup>4</sup> The *و* supplied in the Tehran ed. after *ثبات* is to be omitted (M.).

<sup>5</sup> The reading of the word here translated as "work" is doubtful; see Tehran ed., p. 12, n. 5.



into four estates. This is set down in many places in the holy books and established beyond controversy and interpretation, contradiction and speculation. They are known as the four estates, and at their head is the king<sup>1</sup>. The first estate is that of the clergy; and this estate is further divided among judges and priests, ascetics, temple-guardians and teachers. The second estate is that of the military, that is to say of the fighting-men, of whom there are two groups, cavalry and foot-soldiers. Within them there are differences of rank and function. The third estate is that of the scribes, and they too are divided into groups and categories, such as writers of official communications, accountants, recorders of verdicts and registrations and covenants, and writers of chronicles; physicians, poets and astronomers are numbered among their ranks. The fourth estate is known as that of the artisans, and comprises tillers of land and herders of cattle and merchants and others who earn their living by trade. It is through these four estates that

(13) humanity will prosper as long as it endures. Assuredly there shall be no passing from one to another unless in the character of one of us outstanding capacity is found<sup>2</sup>. His case shall be laid before the King of kings; and after he has been examined by the mobads and

<sup>1</sup> For four (rather than three) estates see Christensen's note on this passage in his *L'Iran*, p. 98, n. 3. The account of the estates given in the *Testament of Ardašir* is similar but not so detailed. Darmesteter cites the Pazand text, *Škand-gumānig Vīzār*, Ch. I, 17, where the king is set at the head of four estates, as here.

There seems to be some precision in the account of the estates given in the *Letter*. Thus the judicial function did belong to the clergy (see Darmesteter, *Zend-Avesta*, I, p. 30; Christensen, *L'Iran*, p. 120). In the MSS. of the *Letter* available to Darmesteter, four divisions only of the priestly estate are given: حکام, زمامد, مدنه, and مصلان. These Darmesteter sought to equate, in that order, with the four lower divisions of the Zoroastrian sacerdotal hierarchy as given in the Pahlavi *Yasna*, namely *dātwar*, *magupat*, *rat* and *magu-andarzpāt*. The meanings of the titles in the two lists were in fair conformity, especially in the cases of the first and last members. In A, however, a fifth title, عباد, is introduced between حکام and زمامد, and the equation is thereby spoilt. The list in the *Yasna* is in any case a formalized one, designed for artificial synchronisation with territorial titles; and has at least one notable omission (i.e. the title *herbad*). It is probably best, therefore, to recognize only a general relationship between the two lists.

<sup>2</sup> The reading یابد is supported by MS. A (M.). Minovi (Tehran ed. pp. 56-7) gives in contrast a passage from the *Testament of Ardašir* in which Ardašir is represented as warning his successors against allowing any transference from one estate to another. Minovi also cites the story of Xosrau I and the shoemaker who sought unsuccessfully to have his son become a scribe (*Šāhnāme*, Tehran ed., VIII, pp. 2545-8; the story is given by Christensen, *L'Iran*, pp. 319-20).

herbads and they have tested him at length to see if they think him worthy, he shall be attached to a different group.

When however men fell upon evil days, under a reign that did not hold fast the welfare of the world, they fixed their desires upon what was not justly theirs; and destroying decency and neglecting the law, they cast away discretion and entered rashly upon ways which led no man knew where. Violence became open and men assailed one another over variance of rank and opinion, till livelihood and faith were lost to all, and those shaped like men took on the character of demons and the nature of beasts, even as it is said in the noble Qur'ān (glorious is He who spoke it): "Devils of men and jinns; some of them inspire others with specious speech to lead astray"<sup>1</sup>. The veil of modesty and decency was lifted, and a people appeared not enhanced by nobleness or skill or achievement nor possessed of ancestral lands; indifferent to personal worth and lineage and also to craft and calling; lacking all discretion, ignorant of any trade, fit only to play the part of informers and evil-doers, with uttering of lies and calumnies. By these means they gained a livelihood and reached the pinnacle of prosperity and amassed fortunes. The King of kings through his pure intelligence and surpassing excellence caused these four estates, which had fallen away, to be restored, and brought back each to its own place and point of departure. He kept each man in his own station<sup>2</sup>, and forbade any to meddle with a calling other than that for which it

(14) had pleased God (great is His glory) to create him. By his hand divine providence has opened for humanity a door unknown to men in ancient days. He laid commands moreover on the heads of the four estates that should they find in one of the men of trades and crafts the imprint of truth and goodness together with devout faith, or should they find a man endowed with strength and might and courage, or possessed of learning and memory and intelligence and merit, then they should bring the matter before him that he might decide the case.

As for what you regard of moment concerning the punishments of the King of kings, and the excessive bloodshed which he orders among those acting against his judgment and decree, know that the

<sup>1</sup> Qur'ān, VI, 112 (E. H. Palmer's translation).

<sup>2</sup> برته ای is to be read, not (as in the Tehran ed.) برته (M.).

ancients refrained from this because the people were not given to disobedience and breach of good order. All were concerned with their means of livelihood and their own affairs, and did not constrain kings to this by evil devices and acts of rebellion. When corruption became rife and men ceased to submit to Religion, Reason and the State, and all sense of values disappeared, it was only through bloodshed that honour could be restored to such a realm. Have you not heard what a man of probity said during such an epoch? "We did not know,<sup>1</sup> and until now we had not heard, that chastity and modesty and contentment, the observance of friendship, true judgment and the maintenance of blood-ties, all depend upon freedom from greed. When greed became manifest in this epoch, good order departed from among us.

(15) Our close companion became<sup>2</sup> a foe; he who was our follower thought to be followed and he who was servant thought to be served. The populace, like demons set at large, abandoned their tasks and were scattered through the cities in theft and riot, roguery and evil pursuits, until it came to this, that slaves ruffled it over their masters and wives laid commands upon their husbands". And he enumerated such things, and finally said: *And there is no kinship and no friendship, no counsel and no law and no good order.*

For you must know that the commands given by the King of kings for occupying people with their own tasks and restraining them from those of others are for the stability of the world and order in the affairs of men. Punishment and bloodshed among people of this kind, even if of a prodigality that seems to have no bound, is recognized by us as life and health, like the rain which quickens the earth and the sun which gives it help and the wind which increases its spirit<sup>3</sup>. For in days to come the foundations of State and Religion will be in every way strengthened through this; and the more the punishment he in-

<sup>1</sup> Darmesteter regarded these cited words, and the reflections which follow them, as an interpolation by Ibnu'l Muqaffa'; but although the use of quotation instead of direct speech is a departure from Tansar's usual manner, the tenor of the passage accords well with a Sasanian origin. The attribution of all evil to Greed (Middle Persian *Āz*) is characteristically Manichaean; to deplore excess is characteristically Zoroastrian. The passage is therefore probably to be regarded as part of the 6th-century redaction.

<sup>2</sup> The variant reading شد (given in the Tehran ed.) is to be rejected. Both A and B have شد (M.).

<sup>3</sup> This is a sentence which reads like a direct translation from Pahlavi.

flicts to make each estate return to its own sphere<sup>1</sup>, the more the praise he will receive.

And with all which he has done, he has set a chief<sup>2</sup> over each, and after the chief an intendant to number them, and after him a trusty inspector to investigate their revenues<sup>3</sup>, and then a teacher to instruct each man from childhood in his trade and calling, that they may rest content in the enjoyment of their own livelihoods. And he has appointed teachers and judges and priests who devote themselves to preaching and teaching. He has also ordered the instructor of the chivalry<sup>4</sup> to keep the fighting-men in town and countryside practised in the use of arms and all kindred arts, that all people of the realm may set about their own tasks. For the sages of old have said: *An idle heart seeks mischief and an empty hand stretches out after evil*<sup>5</sup>. The meaning is that the heart of a workless idler is ever seeking illusions and pursuing empty rumours, and from that trouble is born; and a hand without a task grasps at what is sinful<sup>6</sup>.

You declared: "There is much talk about the blood shed by the king and people are dismayed". The answer is that there are many kings who have put few to death, yet have slain immoderately if they have killed but ten; and there are many who if they put men to death in their thousands should slay still more, being driven to it at that time by their people. Moreover many a man is pardoned by the King of

<sup>1</sup> MS. A has با مرکز, with با in the meaning of به (M.); Iqbal prints مرکز. Darmesteter suggests that this sentence, and what follows, may have been misplaced, since it accords better with the section on estates than with that on punishments. A slightly disjointed treatment of a theme is not, however, uncommon in, e.g., Pahlavi *andarz* literature. Minovi, Tehran ed., p. 57, gives a passage from the *Testament of Ardašir* in which there is a similarly swift transition from a discussion of the estates to an exhortation to ruthlessness in the general interest.

<sup>2</sup> For the Sasanian chiefs of the four estates, *mōbadān-mōbad, ērān-spāhbad, ērān-dabīrbad* and *vāstryōšān-sālār*, see Christensen, *L'Iran*, index, s.v.

<sup>3</sup> Minovi prefers the variant MS. reading دخل to the دخل of MS. A.

<sup>4</sup> Pahlavi *andarzbad i aspwaragān*, Arabic *mu'addib al-asāwira*, see *Zend-Avesta* I 31 (D.).

<sup>5</sup> This saying is among others attributed to Yazdگرد I, see the British Museum MS. Or. 27774, fol. 230 a (M.). For the sentiment one may compare the *Testament of Ardašir*: "And know that the failure of previous governments started with leaving the people free not to practice the known professions and known occupations. So, when idleness spread, it engendered curiosity and criticism" (facsimile ed., p. 108; Deh Khoda, *Amsāl va Hikam*, pp. 1615-16).

<sup>6</sup> All MSS. have بزمه. The reading بزمه, given in the Tehran ed., is an emendation by Minovi, based on the Arabic. It has been adopted without comment by Iqbal.

kings who merits death. The king is far more merciful and mild than Bahman son of Isfandiyār, over whose gentleness bygone peoples have agreed. I tell you that the rarity of punishment and slaughter in those days, and their frequency in these, lies at the door of the people and not at that of the king. Punishments, you must know, are for three kinds of transgressions: first that of the creature against his Lord (glorious is His name) when he turns from the faith and introduces a heresy into religion; another that of the subject against the king when he rebels or practises treachery or duplicity; another between fellow-men when they act unjustly one to another. For each of these three the

(17) King of kings has established a law far better than that of the ancients. For in former days any man who turned from the faith was swiftly and speedily put to death and punished. The King of kings has ordered that such a man should be imprisoned, and that for the space of a year learned men should summon him at frequent intervals and advise him and lay arguments<sup>1</sup> before him and destroy his doubts. If he become penitent and contrite and seek pardon of God, he is set free. If obstinacy and pride hold him back, then is he put to death<sup>2</sup>. Secondly, there used to be no pardon for any who rebelled against a king or fled from the army in the field. The King of kings has established a law whereby some among them are put to death, to inspire terror and be an example to others, and some are left alive, to hope for pardon and stand between expectancy and dread. This is a most comprehensive measure for good government. Thirdly, it was formerly the custom that a man who gave a blow received one, and a man who inflicted a wound suffered one, and the brigand and the thief were both mutilated<sup>3</sup>, and the adulterer likewise. He has laid down a law whereby for a wound there is a fixed fine in proportion to it<sup>4</sup>, so that the wrongdoer may suffer from that and the victim receive benefit and comfort. It is not now as when they cut off a thief's hand, benefiting none and causing great loss among the people. Four times as much is exacted in recompense from the brigand as it is from the thief; and the

<sup>1</sup> برامین (Tehran ed.) is to be omitted after ادله. It is not in any good MS. (M.).

<sup>2</sup> As Darmesteter observes, this seems to be the earliest record of an Inquisition.

<sup>3</sup> The brigand takes by force, the thief stealthily. This is the difference between Avestan *hazarha* and *tāyūš*, cf. *Yasna* 12. 2 (D.).

<sup>4</sup> The words inserted in the Tehran edition are to be cut out, and the reading of A is to be followed (given there, p. 17, n. 7) (M.).

adulterer has his nose cut off. No member is severed whereby capacity would be diminished. Thus they are shamed and disgraced, but yet no loss befalls their work and activity<sup>1</sup>. These statutes he had (18) written in the book of laws<sup>2</sup>; and thereafter he said<sup>3</sup>: "Know that we found men divided into three groups, and have contented ourselves with three policies towards them. One group among them, which is small, consists of a choice few, the virtuous; our policy towards them is pure kindliness. The second group consists of evil-doers and scoundrels and the seditious; towards them our policy is unmixed terror. The third group, which is numerous, consists of the various throng, towards whom our policy is a blending of favour and fear, neither such security as to make them overbold nor such dread as to make them flee away. Sometimes one should exact death for a transgression which merits and deserves pardon, and sometimes pardon a transgression which demands death<sup>4</sup>. Since we have seen that by the laws and customs of the ancients the injured received no benefit, but society suffered a mischief and loss in numbers and vigour, we have established this law and custom that people may act upon it in our own day and hereafter; and we have ordered the judges that if offenders of this kind, whose fines are fixed, repeat their offences a second time, their ears and noses are to be cut off, but no injury done to any other limb".

As for another passage, in which you wrote of the affairs of great families and of degree and rank, saying: "The King of kings has had established new customs and new ways; but family and rank are as corner-piers and struts and foundations and pillars. When the foundation perishes the house decays, is ruined and collapses", know that the decay of family and rank is twofold in nature. In the one case

<sup>1</sup> The translation is of the reading of B and the majority of MSS. (given in the Tehran ed., p. 18, n. 1), which Minovi prefers to that of A (given in his text).

<sup>2</sup> This is a translation of the variant کتاب سنون, preferred by Minovi to the کتاب و سنون of A.

<sup>3</sup> گفت (not in A) is present in at least three other MSS. (M.). It is given without comment by Iqbal.

<sup>4</sup> In the *Testament of Ardašir* the King says that it is necessary "for us to tie the door of harshness to the door of mercy, and the door of killing to that of sparing" (facsimile, p. 107; *Amsāl va Hikam*, p. 1615); but there is no advocacy there of such arbitrary despotism as is here recommended as salutary.

- (19) men pull down the family and allow rank to be unjustly lowered; in the other it is time itself without another's endeavour which deprives them of honour and worth and the splendour of position. Degenerate heirs appear, who adopt boorish ways and forsake noble manners and lose their dignity in the sight of the people. They busy themselves like tradesmen with the earning of money, and neglect to garner fair fame. They marry among the vulgar and those who are not their peers, and from that birth and begetting men of low character appear; and this is what is meant by "decadence of rank". The King of kings has issued a decree to exalt and ennoble their rank, whose like we have not heard from any man. By it he has established a visible and general distinction between men of noble birth and common people with regard to horses and clothes, houses and gardens, women and servants. Furthermore he has set differences among the nobles themselves with regard to entrance- and drinking-places, sitting- and standing-places<sup>1</sup>, clothes, ornaments and houses, according to the dignity of each man's rank; that they may look after their own households and know the privileges and places appropriate to themselves. So no commoner may share sources of enjoyment of life with the nobles, and alliance and marriage between the two groups is forbidden. He has said: "I knew it to be shame and disgrace<sup>2</sup> that such-an-one among our ancestors had a box for mother. I forbid any man of birth<sup>3</sup> to seek a wife among common people, that rank may remain distinct. And whoever does so, I make it unlawful for him to inherit. And I forbid common people to buy the house-property and estates<sup>4</sup> of nobles". And he
- (20) was zealous in this matter, that rank and station might remain fixed for each man and might be registered in books and archives.

The story of the box is this. Long ago there was a great king who became wrath with his women and said: "I shall show you that I

<sup>1</sup> These four words are ambiguous, since they may refer either to buildings (entrance-halls, banqueting-rooms etc.) or to places assigned to nobles at court. *موقف* is usually used in the latter sense (M.).

<sup>2</sup> This translation is based on an emendation of the reading of A, *مردم*, *بندگ*, suggested by Henning; Minovi considers the text at this point too corrupt to admit of satisfactory emendation. Iqbal prints, without any comment: *است* [که زن] *بندگ و عا*.

<sup>3</sup> *مردم زاده* means 'noble, a man of rank' (Minovi, who cites, p. 58, a proverb from Deh Khoda's *Amsāl va Hikam*: *مردمی بهتر که مردم زاده*).

<sup>4</sup> *مستقل واملاک* MS. A (M.); Iqbal does not print the *و*.

have no need of you". He demanded a box into which he cast his seed. One of the women took the seed to herself and a child was born. It was declared that its mother was a queen and its father a box<sup>1</sup>. In the Bible of the Jews and the Gospel of the Christians it is said that in the time of Noah (upon him be peace!) men multiplied and not a span of earth was untitled<sup>2</sup>. The sons of gods mingled with the daughters of the sons of Adam (upon him be peace!) and giants were born of them, till God (glorious is His name!) caused the Flood as means of their destruction.

Thus in his solicitude for maintenance of rank the King of kings has reached a point beyond which<sup>3</sup> one can conceive no advance. He has declared that any man after him who transgresses this law will merit degradation of rank and execution, confiscation of property and exile from his native land. He has said: "This matter have I written down for the sake of kings hereafter, who may perchance lack power to keep religion strong. They may read in my book and act thereon". Rest assured that the king is the symbol of order between peasant and knight. He is our delight on the day of delight, our shelter, refuge and retreat on the day of terror from the foe<sup>4</sup>. Thus has he said: "Cities and treasures you guard from disaster, and tongues from doubtful utterance<sup>5</sup>. Nothing needs such guarding as degree among men". And he has said: "My charge to those who come after me is

<sup>1</sup> "On ne voit pas clairement le rapport de cette histoire bizarre avec le développement de l'appui duquel elle est donnée... L'histoire en elle-même rentre dans un ensemble de contes représentés surtout dans l'Inde (Vasiṣṭha, conçu de Mitrā-Varuṇa dans le *kumbha*, d'après le *Rig Veda*; Agastya dit *kumbha-sambhāva*. Variante atténuée: *Fraḍāxšti Xumbya*, élevé dans la cruche, *Bundahišn*, 29, 5; origine des Afghans Kārīānai, *Kilidi Afghani*, 185)" (D.). See further his *Zend-Avesta* II 551, n. 293. The whole of this paragraph was probably added at the time of the 6th-century redaction.

<sup>2</sup> Nothing is said in Genesis VI of the tilling of earth. It seems likely that this detail has been transferred to the Jewish tradition from the Zoroastrian legend of Yima (Jamšid) (H.).

<sup>3</sup> A has the obscure reading *آن وکی وری*, which in the copy appears as *وکی وری* *آن* (see Tehran ed., p. 20, n. 4) (M.). Iqbal gives without comment the variant reading *آن وکی وری*, which is the one translated here.

<sup>4</sup> Christensen (*L'Iran*, p. 364) points out the appropriateness of this sentiment to the reign of a king as powerful as Xosrau; but Ardašir was also an iron ruler. What follows, from *Thus has he said* to the end of the paragraph, is lacking in the MSS. available to Darmesteter, but is present in both A and B.

<sup>5</sup> The words "doubtful utterance" translate *دیت*, suggested by Minovi as a possible emendation of *زیت*, for which there are no variants.

this: entrust your servings and dealings to the intelligent, trivial though (21) the tasks may be. If it is but the wielding of a broom or the sprinkling of a road with water<sup>1</sup>, assign it to the most intelligent of those who do such things. For advantage is with intelligence, hurt and misery with ignorance. The intelligent have said: "The ignorant man sees askant. The crooked he beholds as straight, and thinks the broken, whole. He regards a great thing as small and accounts a small one great. Because of the shapes cast by ignorance he can see neither before nor after. He understands matters only at the end, after he has brought them to a confusion that cannot be remedied. The ignorant man cannot perceive a gradually-increasing harm, till it reaches a stage<sup>2</sup> when knowledge cannot retrieve it".

As for what you wrote: "I have held nothing to be of more moment in matters of religion that to esteem the law of proxy and establish it firmly. The King of kings has neglected its observance", know that the King of kings found the laws of religion corrupt and confused, and heresy and innovations rife. He has set observers over the people, that when a man dies, leaving property, they may tell the priests, who divide that property among the heirs and descendants according to custom and to his will. If a man have no property, they see to his burial and his children. The king has however enjoined that offspring of the proxies of princes or nobles themselves rank as princes or nobles. In this there is no refutation or rejection either of religious law or of reason.

This is the meaning of the expression "proxy" in their religion<sup>3</sup>: when death came upon<sup>4</sup> a man who had no son<sup>5</sup>, his wife, if he left one, was given in marriage to the one among the dead man's relatives who was chief and closest to him. If there were no wife, but a daughter,

<sup>1</sup> MS. A has دا, i.e. راه را آب زدن (M.).

<sup>2</sup> MS. A has تا چنان نشود (M.); Iqbal prints تا چنان شود without comment.

<sup>3</sup> Darmesteter points out that the Pahlavi *Rivāyāt* corroborate the explanation of this Zoroastrian custom given here. He cites E. W. West, *Sacred Books of the East*, V, p. 143 n., and his own edition of the *Zend-Avesta*, III, p. 174 with n. 11. He also thanks S. Lévi for drawing his attention to the almost identical passage in Al-Bīrūnī's *India*, taken from "The book of Tōsar" (see E. C. Sachau's edition, p. 53, translation, I, p. 109; intro., above, p. 3). The Pahlavi word rendered as "proxy" is *stūr*.

<sup>4</sup> MS. A has فرا رسیدی (M.). Iqbal prints رسیدی.

<sup>5</sup> The original Arabic presumably had ولد "son"; this is the word used by Al-Bīrūnī. Ibn Isfandiār uses Persian فرزند "child" (M.).

the same was done. If there were neither of these two, they would (22) provide for a woman from the dead man's property and give her to his nearest kinsman. And every son who was born they assigned to the man who had left the legacy. Anyone who approved the contrary of this custom had in fact slain innumerable souls, since he had cut off the dead man's race and memory to the end of time<sup>1</sup>. It is likewise in the Bible of the Jews, that a brother should marry his dead brother's wife and preserve the brother's race<sup>2</sup>. The Christians forbid this.

Next for what you said, that the King of kings has taken away fires from the fire-temples<sup>3</sup>, extinguished them and blotted them out, and that no one has ever before presumed so far against religion; know that the case is not so grievous, but has been wrongly reported to you. The truth is that after Darius each of the "kings of the peoples" built his own fire-temple. This was pure innovation, introduced by them without the authority of kings of old. The King of kings has razed the temples, and confiscated the endowments, and had the fires carried back to their places of origin<sup>4</sup>.

You stated next that elephants were kept at the court of the King of kings and that he had had "cows" and "donkeys" and "trees" constructed. All that you described has been done by him at religion's call, so that any man practising sorcery or highway-robbery, or interpreting the faith in ways unsanctioned by the holy law, may have his due. Though he himself had found the path to all pertaining to<sup>5</sup> benevolence and gentleness and leniency, and had practised it, yet

<sup>1</sup> The sentence beginning *Anyone who ...* has been translated from Al-Bīrūnī's quotation from "The book of Tōsar" (*loc. cit.*), since Ibn Isfandiār evidently mistook the Arabic here. His version runs: *Anyone who had approved the contrary of this, they killed. They used to say that the race of that man must remain till the end of time.* This contains an inherent absurdity; see Minovi, p. 59.

<sup>2</sup> i.e. the custom of the Levirate (D.).

<sup>3</sup> MS. A has آتشکده in the singular (M.). The word is given in the plural by Iqbal. On this paragraph see above, intro., pp. 16-17.

<sup>4</sup> The last sentence of this paragraph, together with the whole of the two following paragraphs, is peculiar to MSS. A and B. The reading *تاها* (rendered here as "endowments") is clear in both MSS., and is accepted by Minovi; Iqbal (p. 25, n. 1) suggests the emendation *تاها*. As Darmesteter points out, the unity of the Persian empire, for which Ardašīr was striving, required that there should be only one royal fire.

<sup>5</sup> Instead of *عقلش بهشت* of the copy (as in the Tehran ed.), A has داشت; Iqbal prints without comment *عقل داشت*, an emendation approved by Minovi.

he knew that he could break in the stubborn and make them obedient only by stern exercises; and that a plaster is not useful and beneficial (23) for deep wounds<sup>1</sup>, which must be lanced or cauterised. We know that many gallant men have sought such a man for the world's well-being, and found him not<sup>2</sup>. Not every man can do such cures, by reason of his own weakness — being like a compassionate mother, who seeks a physician for a child beloved of her heart and entwined within her life. When she sees how he orders bitter medicines and burning cauteries and cruel incisions, her heart through weakness and lack of resolution is filled with turmoil and anguish and grief. But by all that the child is cured of sicknesses and brought to health, and comfort and peace come to the weak mother's breast, and she blesses and praises that physician for the safety of her child.

*Elucidation*<sup>3</sup>: "elephant" refers to his ordering that highway-robbers and heretics be cast beneath an elephant's feet. The "cow" was a cauldron made in the shape of a cow. Lead was melted in it and a man cast into it. A "donkey" was of iron with three legs<sup>4</sup>. Several were kept hanging from it by the feet until they died. And the "tree" was put up for crucifixion. This punishment was kept for sorcerers and highway-robbers.

Next for what you said, that the King of kings has forbidden people too lavish a way of life and too ample an expenditure. This he has made a binding law, his purpose being to make clear the divisions and distinctions among the people, that the appurtenances proper to each class may be plainly seen. The nobles<sup>5</sup> are distinguished from the artisans and tradespeople by their dress and horses and trappings of pomp, and their women likewise by silken garments; also by their lofty dwellings, their trousers, headgear, hunting and whatever else is customary for the noble. As for the soldiers or fighting-men,

<sup>1</sup> جراحتها با غور A (as conjectured by Minovi, see Tehran ed. p. 22, n. 8; the copy has ماغور).

<sup>2</sup> In A the verb has no pointing. Minovi now prefers to read یافت instead of یافتند (the reading of the Tehran edition and Iqbal).

<sup>3</sup> MS. A has the word تفسیر (M.).

<sup>4</sup> The giving of the name "donkey" to a three-legged instrument of torture may have been inspired by the existence in Zoroastrian myth of a three-legged donkey (see the *Greater Bundahishn*, ed. T. D. Anklesaria, p. 153 ll. 2-3) (H.).

<sup>5</sup> اشراف is to be read, not اشرفا. The را does not appear in any MS. (M.).

he has conferred positions of honour and favours of all kinds upon (24) that group, because they are ever sacrificing their own lives and possessions and followers for the welfare of those who labour, devoting themselves to combat with the country's foes, while the common people sit at ease among their wives and children, enjoying repose and tranquillity, safe and secure in their own houses and in pursuit of their own livelihoods. It is fitting that the working people should salute them and bow before them, and that the fighting men in turn should show reverence to the nobles, and that they too should have regard one for another according to<sup>1</sup> the loftiness of their rank, and that they should maintain their dignity. For<sup>2</sup> if it is allowed men to act under the sway of their own wishes and desires, their wishes and desires<sup>3</sup> have no apparent term or limit. They seek after things for which their means do not suffice and soon become poor and needy. When the people have become poor, the royal treasury remains empty, the soldier receives no pay and the kingdom is lost. He has restrained the princes from squandering wealth and behaving rashly, lest they become dependent on the working people; and has so allotted their manner of life, that if one have a thousand treasure-houses and another a pittance, both live according to the law<sup>4</sup>. For those who<sup>5</sup> were the most virtuous and pious, he chose out princesses, that all might desire virtue and chastity. He was content with one or two wives for himself, and disapproved of having many children, saying: "To have many children is fitting for the populace, but kings and nobles take pride in the smallness of their families". *The hedgerow bird has a numerous brood but the falcon contents herself with a small one.*

Next for what you wrote, that "the King of kings has set informers and spies over the people of the land, and this has filled all men with

<sup>1</sup> Where the copy has درین (given in the Tehran ed.), A has لاین, which Minovi emends to لائق. Iqbal prints درین without comment.

<sup>2</sup> The remainder of this paragraph (after ... *maintain their dignity*) is peculiar to A.

<sup>3</sup> In both places (i.e., Tehran ed., p. 246 and p. 247) the MS. A has هوی و مراد (M.); Iqbal prints in the first instance مراد.

<sup>4</sup> برست A (M.; Iqbal).

<sup>5</sup> مرکه را که A (M.); مرکه را Iqbal. Minovi takes مرکه as بذل for دختران پادشاهان, and translates: *he chose out from among the princesses those who were the most virtuous and pious* — that is, he chose them as his own wives. Henning prefers to take مرکه را as an ethical dative, which yields the translation given here. Either translation could be defended on historical grounds (see Christensen, *L'Empire*, p. 29, n. 1; *L'Iran*, p. 109, n. 2).

- (25) fear and stupefaction". Innocent and upright men have nothing to dread, for no one would be made the "eyes"<sup>1</sup> and informer of the King, who was not trustworthy, obedient, pure, devout, learned, religious and abstinent in worldly things. Anything therefore which he reported would be based on the well-attested and proven. Since you are of a proper frame of mind and obedient, and they report this of you truthfully to the king, you should be the happier for it, since they report your devotedness and his favours are increased<sup>2</sup>. In the testament which the King of kings has written<sup>3</sup>, he has dealt with this subject minutely, saying: "Ignorance on the part of the king and lack of knowledge of the affairs of men is a doorway for evil<sup>4</sup>. But his seeking knowledge must be on condition that he is careful not to heed the words of men unworthy of trust and reliance. Nor should he necessarily follow this course and work according to it and think and say: "I am following the example of Ardašir". For I ordained this in an epoch of disorder, with religious matters in confusion<sup>5</sup> and the kingdom tottering, when all were strangers and rascals and there were no good men<sup>6</sup>. And then moreover I chose out the trusty, true and upright, and gave no order without testing and verification. It may be that after me there will be a better people<sup>7</sup>". Opportunity must never be given to rascals who by way of laying information bring such news
- (26) to the ear of kings that if they grant it a hearing (from which God preserve us), neither will people and subjects rest safe and tranquil, nor

<sup>1</sup> The title "Eye of the King" was given in Old Persian to the official who reported on the activity of provincial governors; see H. H. Schaefer "Iranica", *Abhandlungen d. Gesellschaft d. Wissenschaften zu Göttingen*, 1934, pp. 1-4.

<sup>2</sup> MS. A زیادت (M.); زیاد (Iqbal).

<sup>3</sup> See intro., above, p. 14.

<sup>4</sup> n. 8 on p. 25 of the Tehran ed. is to be deleted; the words in question are found only in the copy, not in A (M.). For the cited sentence cf. the version of the *Testament of Ardašir* in the MS. Köprülü 1608, f. 148 v, apud M. Grignaschi, *Journal asiatique*, 1966, pp. 51, 72.

<sup>5</sup> برخال A (M.), برخال Iqbal.

<sup>6</sup> هیچ اختیار نه A; the words in brackets in the Tehran edition (p. 25, l. 10) are to be ignored (M.).

<sup>7</sup> This sentence is not found in the later MSS.; and Christensen (*Les Gestes*, p. 99, n. 1) suggests that it may be an interpolation. It rests on good manuscript evidence, however, and its sense fits with the tenor of the whole argument — namely that the stern measures advocated may be necessary only in certain ages.

will kings have any trust and confidence in their loyalty and service. When the affairs of the kingdom reach this stage, revolution comes swiftly and the king is taxed with weakness of judgment and lack of power. Do not therefore let your princely self believe that the King of kings is following a foolish course ...<sup>1</sup>.

Then you said: "he has exacted money from men of wealth and merchants". If you spoke of men as wealthy who are not so, you are talking to no purpose. If not, it is one of the proofs of wealth that he took nothing which was grudged and reluctant. As for those who brought offerings<sup>2</sup> without willingness and eagerness, be pleased not to call<sup>3</sup> them wealthy, but to describe them as rogues and rascals, since they acquired possessions by subterfuge and meanness and baseness and not by lawful ways. The idea that the king of the day should seek help for the common people from the superfluity of the wealthy is a religious principle and clearly justified in reason.

Another question: "What has prevented the King of kings from appointing and nominating his successor?"<sup>4</sup> Know for answer that in this matter he was concerned for the mischief which would be caused by his designated successor. For were he to appoint and nominate anyone, that man would be mistrustful and anxious in dealings with every other person; and if anyone slackened in efforts to secure his favour, then he would bear a grudge against him. Moreover, when he sees his own successor, the king says: "this man is waiting and watching for my death"<sup>5</sup>. Friendship and affection and kindliness grow cold in his heart. Since to know the succession holds no advantage for king or people, it is best hidden. It is possible also that were it known, enemies would not lack plots and stratagems; and rebellious

<sup>1</sup> The sentence ends with a rhyming parallel, meaning literally *and an argument by boast*, which yields better sound than sense (M.). بلاف, restored in the Tehran edition, is present in A. The whole of the following paragraph, and the first part of the next, is missing from Darmesteter's MSS.

<sup>2</sup> To get good sense from this passage, the و must be omitted between رغبت and خدمت (M.).

<sup>3</sup> خواهد...نه A; خواهد...نه B (M.). The variant in B is not given by Iqbal.

<sup>4</sup> The appointing of a successor is discussed at some length, and on the same lines, in the *Testament*; Minovi has given a Persian translation of the relevant passage in the Tehran edition, pp. 60-61.

<sup>5</sup> This translation is preferred by M.; H. would translate instead *Moreover, the successor sees himself as king. (The king) says ...*

(27) devils and those with the evil eye among jinns or men would bring affliction. Be assured moreover that whoever early becomes the cynosure of men's eyes will be exposed to ruin through egoism and lack of generous feeling. Whoever becomes an egoist will rebel against what is right; and whoever has become rebellious will soon fall into rages; and when he has fallen into a rage he will act unjustly; and when he has acted unjustly people will seek to be avenged on him, so that he will perish and others will lose their lives through him. The king should be one who has given obedience before he takes up the reins<sup>1</sup> of rulership; one who has known what it is to contend against desire, and to taste the bitterness of frustration; one who has endured censure and chastisement from woman and child, master and man, friend and foe. I shall tell you a tale to illustrate this, which I know you will not have heard; and although<sup>2</sup> I have some anxiety lest this story of mine should survive among our descendants to be a reproach to us and to our understandings, yet I shall set it down so that I may add to your knowledge.

Known that we are called "the Iranian people"<sup>3</sup>, and there is no quality or trait of excellence or nobility which we hold dearer than this, that we have ever showed humility and lowliness and humbleness in the service of kings, and have chosen obedience and loyalty, devotion and fidelity. Through this quality our works were established and we came to be the head and neck of all the climes. And it is because of this that we are called "the lowly" in scripture and in other books. Among the other honourable designations which are ours, this has been the best and the most prized both by our ancestors and their descendants; till we reached a point when it became clear to us that this name serves to call and admonish us, and that through it glory and greatness, honour and rank endure for us, whereas abasement, abjectness and ruin come through hauteur, self-love and high-handedness. Our ancestors and their descendants have held to this belief

<sup>1</sup> MS. A has لنام, to be taken for لگام (M.); so also Iqbal, see his edition, p. 28, n. 1.

<sup>2</sup> MS. A has ولكن (not ولاكن) (M.).

<sup>3</sup> The opening sentence of this paragraph occurs only in MS. A; and the words here translated as "the Iranian people" appear in fact as قريش "the people of the Quraysh". The common occurrence in Arabic writings of the name of the Quraysh has presumably led to a corruption of the word قرى (H. and M.). What follows has its point in an old confusion, dating back at least to Sasanian times, between two Middle Persian words, *ēr* < *arya* "Aryan, Iranian" and *ēr* < *adara* "low, humble".

and resolve and have known nothing but goodness and benevolence from kings, and kings nothing but obedience and affection from them. So have we been envied in our peace and quietness by the peoples of the world and have ruled the seven climes; so that if one of us had made the circuit of the seven climes, no living creature would have dared to cast a disrespectful glance upon him<sup>1</sup> through dread of our kings. So we lived till the days of Darius, son of Čihrzād. No king in the world was wiser, more learned or of nobler character than he, nor more beloved and absolute in power. From China to the western lands of Greece all kings were his ready slaves and sent to him tribute and gifts. He was given the by-name of Toyūlsāh<sup>2</sup>.

The source of all the troubles and afflictions which have come upon him and upon his son Darius and upon the people of their day and upon us now is this: Toyūlsāh was a man who coveted the world and loved children, and because of his love for the world, affection for the only child he had overwhelmed him; for he perceived that if he gave him his own name and bestowed crown and throne upon him, when he himself died he would still be numbered among the living and his memory would survive with his name. Day by day he read an omen into the child's every movement and pictured in his growth the splendour of his own state. So it is said, *As the child grows older, the father grows younger*. Nor did he believe that

*There are things in the Unknown which thwart imaginings;* (29)

*Man does but gall himself with auguries and omens.*

*He thinks by them to open the gate to the Unknown,*

*But it is fast shut with locks against him.*

When the child had left the time of cradle and swaddling-band and reached the stage of couch and carpet, he had the gates of honour flung open and the resources of fatherly favour marshalled. He

<sup>1</sup> Literally "upon us".

<sup>2</sup> In Zoroastrian tradition, as shaped in the post-Achaemenian period, Darius I is represented as the son of Bahman Dirāz-dast and his wife Humāy Čihrzād; see F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, pp. 131-32. The by-name of Toyūlsāh here given him remains obscure. Darmesteter suggested, very tentatively, that possibly some Turkish prince bore both names, *Dārā* and *Toyril* (here corrupted into *Toyūl*). Henning inclines rather to regard Toyūlsāh as the corruption of some Pahlavi word. In this Zoroastrian tradition only Darius I and Darius III are recognised, the latter being made the son of the former (see the next paragraph of the text).



devoted himself to his education and to organizing him and his household, and appointed officials, so that from the moment when he opened his eyes he saw himself crowned and enthroned. He did not think that kingship came by act of God, but that it was peculiarly his own attribute. He neglected to seek light from the counsel of men of intelligence and understanding and from those of whom he would one day have need. To himself he said: "*From father to son, kingship is mine. The sun and the sown, the fowl and the fish, all are mine. If Fate should ...<sup>1</sup>, I shall tear it to pieces; if Destiny should gaze into the spaciousness of my eminence, I shall sew up its eyes*".

There was a boy named Bīrī among their attendants' children. The prince became intimate with him and they grew to be friends and companions at board and table, till both became flown with the wine of pride and came to have one character and disposition. The prince, lacking natural understanding or ennobling generosity, was led by the fewness<sup>2</sup> of his wits to entrust the office of his private secretary to this youth, who is now proverbial among Iranians as a bringer of misfortune. Toyūlsāh had a secretary broken to work and galled in harness, tried and trusted in his service, wise, of sound judgment, (30) pious and faithful, of pleasing appearance and acclaimed character, with a virtuous disposition and auspicious temperament. Rastīn was his name. So it has been said: *The world re-echoed the praise of his virtuous deeds — deeds by whose like men have dated their writings.* Bīrī began to strive with him over rank, conceiving in his heart a desire for his place; and before he was fitted to reach that station, he made the steed of acceleration prance to and fro, laying the lance of taunt and gibe upon his shoulder and drawing the sword of rancour from its sheath — all for the sake of that position. He laid denunciations of this man, written and spoken, before the nobles and grandees, although he was the deputy and representative of Toyūlsāh. The time came when matters passed beyond all bounds; for Bīrī, being young, would not be still nor show forbearance and patience, that the position might in time be his. It has been said *Better is a dog, though the most worthless cur, than one who wrangles about a leader's place before he is fit*

<sup>1</sup> The words پدر فراید are unintelligible.

<sup>2</sup> The reading of the word translated as "fewness" is doubtful. پیری and پیری are both unattested, but either would yield the meaning "smallness" (H.).

to hold it<sup>1</sup>. One day therefore Rastīn went before the King of kings and sought private audience. At that time, if people could not tell the King of kings a matter plainly, they would invent fictitious anecdotes and tales out of their own heads, and relate them, that he might ask questions in the course of them and probe the matter. Rastīn said 2:

"May the life of the King of kings be linked in duration with time itself! I have heard that once upon a time there was a city amid some islands, prosperous and secure. A king ruled this city who had inherited authority over it from his ancestors. In the environs of that city a troop of monkeys had made their home, and they too passed their days in ease of life, with abundance and tranquillity; and they had a king whom they obeyed, to whose council they lent ear and to whose guidance they inclined their hearts. They did not let a sigh from their hearts reach their lips without sign from him. One day he desired them to assemble. When they were gathered together, he said: "We must betake ourselves from the neighbourhood of this city and travel to another place. *For I see beneath the ashes the glowing of embers, and soon flames will leap up!*" The monkeys said: "It behoves you to tell the reason for this decision and the cause of this happening, and to justify to us this resolve, that we may be of one accord. If the plan promises success and welfare, none will deviate from your counsel". He said: "Assuredly I shall not divulge the reason for this to you, for this abode has been pleasant<sup>3</sup> to you and is a spacious and delightful place<sup>4</sup>, full of blessings. I know that if I possessed you of what is known to me, it would have no weight in your eyes and no place in your hearts. But since you know the excellence of my understanding and the superiority of my intelligence over yours, accept my counsel and consider obedience necessary, that we may go to another place. For the sages have said: *What is foresight but to keep my riding-camels lightly burdened, lest I should not enjoy my share of sustenance in the place of my birth?* In any case the custom of (31)

<sup>1</sup> The author of this couplet is Mansūr b. Ismā'il al-Faqlh who died in Basra in A. H. 306 (918 A.C.) (M.).

<sup>2</sup> On the story which follows here see *Asia Major*, n.s., V, 1 (1955), 50 ff., and intro., above, p. 15.

<sup>3</sup> Reading خوش آمد, with all MSS. (M.).

<sup>4</sup> Reading جای فراخ, with all MSS. (M.).

all prophets and apostles has been to leave their country and to go into exile away from tyranny and calamity. Nor does it accord with reason that a wise man should see presages of evil and bodings of harm for himself and his servants, his people and followers, and make light of it, letting care for his birthplace and home<sup>1</sup> outweigh the sweetness of the life which he might profitably lead elsewhere. He risks (32) being called ignorant and slothful and draws death upon himself by folly. *Kufa is not my mother nor Basra my father, nor does sloth hold me back from journeying. Man finds joy in his own stumblings, and rest in death: and upon earth the noble man has wide space for travelling*<sup>2</sup>. For he who is noble by origin and honourable by nature takes with him, to every place and abode where he makes his dwelling, natural excellencies and pleasures in small things. When he falls for example into the sea, then generosity and triumphant virtues swim along with him. If greatness and worth<sup>3</sup>, livelihood and dignity, were but in one place, all others being excluded, it would not have been said: *If the mere abiding of a man in one home brought glory to him, the sun would not quit her house in Leo even for a day*". The monkeys said: "It is from fullness of compassion, O king, and abundance of affection for us, your subjects, that you so earnestly prepare the ground for our acceptance of this counsel. Assuredly had not Fate revealed some momentous happening and some deadly blow, you would not speak in such enlarged terms. But while the explanation of the circumstance of this resolve is not made known to us, the beating of our hearts will not be stilled. Doubtless once we understand this mystery we shall feel bound to do whatever you enjoin and to refrain from whatever you forbid; and through the fullness of your compassion and the conspicuousness of your mercy new strength will be given to the vigour

<sup>1</sup> مولد means the place where one is born and lives (synonymous with *موطن*). Professor Deh Khoda has met the expression used in the following verse of Jamālū-d Dīn 'Abdu-r Rizzāq Isfahānī, which is not without ambiguity, however:

چو نام و تنگ فراید وفا نه نام و نه تنگ  
چو زاد و یود نماید جفا نه زاد و نه یود

It is perhaps unnecessary to mention that, apart from this phrase, *زاد* means "birth-place" (Minovi, p. 62).

<sup>2</sup> This verse, and what follows, down to and including the next verse-quotation, are absent from Darmesteter's edition.

<sup>3</sup> The reading of B, namely *منهبت* و *عر*, has been followed here in preference to the *غرور* منهبت of A (M.).

of our hearts and the liveliness of our actions". The king of the monkeys said: "Know that yesterday I was in a tree commanding the outskirts of this city and I looked into the palace of its king. I saw one of the rams belonging to the prince of this city butting at one of his servant-girls. Wise men have said: *Avoid a place where incompatibles are together*, and have admonished against it. I do not wish to rebel against the command of the sages nor to consider their utterances as jests". The monkeys all smiled in astonishment at his words. Then beginning to be vexed and angry, they said to him stubbornly and (33) scoffingly: "*If lightning should appear over the sand-hills round the bend of the river-bed*<sup>1</sup>, then should I return, even though my eyes filled and I wept tears. You are our lord and king of so many years, mentor of the people, venerable<sup>2</sup>, wise and experienced. Will you not tell us then what is to befall us through butting and squabbling between a ram and the king's servant-girl?" The king of the monkeys said: "Firstly your destruction, which in itself is trifling and of no moment, concerning in the beginning only yourselves. Thereafter destruction to the people of this city, ruin and slaughter". At this statement the monkeys' surprise and astonishment increased. They said: "We have not known you in this state before. The evil eye has affected you and a veil has appeared over your understanding. Pray provide yourself with sound diet till we bring physicians and cure your melancholy, that you may be restored to yourself and not become debarred and excluded from kingship". The king of the monkeys said: "Rightly have the sages said: *A man who lacks intelligence cannot be made illustrious even by power; a man who lacks contentment cannot be made rich even by wealth; a man who lacks faith cannot be given understanding of religious law even by the traditions*<sup>3</sup>. Since this is your opinion of me, it is better that I should go in search of a physician myself and remove the burden of sickness from you". And straightway he tightened the girth of the steed of separation and abandoned his realm.

Not long after that, the servant-girl ran out of the palace with (34)

<sup>1</sup> *الجرع*, rendered here as "river-bed", may in fact be a place-name (M.). This verse is not in Darmesteter's MSS.

<sup>2</sup> Reading *من* صاحب, with all MSS. (M.).

<sup>3</sup> This Arabic quotation is followed by a Persian rendering, in which the word سلطان, which at the time of Ibnu'l Muqaffa' meant "power", is mistranslated by Ibn Isfandiyyār as "king" (M.).

a bottle of oil in her hand and a firebrand. The ram, as had become its custom, went to meet the girl and flung itself against her. The girl threw the glass bottle and firebrand at it, and the oil met fire and fleece. In its terror at the heat from the flames the ram rushed from that door to another, fleeing from house to house till it came to the home of one of the chief pillars of the state, one of the city's leading men. By chance the master of the house was sick. It ran to him, burning him and several other nobles. This news was carried to the ruler of the city, who demanded from the physicians herbs and plasters for burns. They agreed that nothing was so efficacious for such a plaster as a monkey's gall, and said it was a thing perfectly simple to get <sup>1</sup>. A man was bidden <sup>2</sup> take horse and hunt down a monkey and bring back its gall. In accordance with the king's commands the huntsman by craft and cunning caught a monkey and achieved his purpose. The monkeys banded together and killed the king's messenger and scattered his limbs piecemeal. This was told the king, who took horse and joined battle with the monkeys and slaughtered so many that compunction overtook him. Thus a monkey was able to approach one of the king's courtiers. He saluted him and said: "For many years we have lived beside you. Neither have we suffered harm from you, nor you loss from us. Each has concerned himself with his allotted sustenance and his private life <sup>3</sup>. What purpose roused you to slay us and root us out, thus wounding (35) the eye of generosity with thorns and making light of the claims of neighbourliness; finding pretext to scorn the keeping of troth and settling at nought the reproaches of this world and the penalties of the next? *O tyrants over us in your government! — tyranny is the worst deed that is enacted!*" That man told the monkey the whole story of the ram and girl and fire, of the men who were burnt and the physicians' remedies, the killing of the hunter and the king's vengeance. The monkey's eyes filled with tears and he said: "It was true, the saying of the Commander of the Faithful, Ali (upon him be peace): "Truly revolt against the counsel of a compassionate, wise and experienced man bequeathes sorrow and leaves behind remorse". *I told you my bidding at the bend*

<sup>1</sup> Or possibly "that it was (an animal) gentle and easy (to catch)". The construction is awkward.

<sup>2</sup> MS. A has فرمودند (M.).

<sup>3</sup> The words rendered as "private life" mean literally "veiled veil". The phrase is obscure (M.).

of the sand-hills, but you did not see that it was good counsel till the sun was high next morning. Noble sir! Fate's torrent has borne us first away to the sea of nothingness. Let us see what straws Fortune scatters on the path for your destruction". The man questioned him, saying: "You have made grave utterance. Have you any evidence <sup>1</sup> or proof, any support or convincing reason for these words?" The monkey said: "Know that we had a king, wise and sagacious, virtuous and learned, who knew the wonders of the world and the marvels of the heavens; who by powerful intellect escaped a thousand ambushes, who never set foot in Fortune's snare, nor fell victim to her sleights. He had firm courage and a prescient mind. *Church and state and all* (36) *the peoples, yea God himself were pleased by his endeavours* <sup>2</sup>. One day, to gaze abroad, he climbed a tree which was beside <sup>3</sup> the city's walls". And he told the story of the ram and servant-girl, and what had passed between them and the king, to the very end. Then he said: "Because we would not hearken to his counsels and showed ingratitude for his bounties <sup>4</sup>, he, not being willing to meet such a death <sup>5</sup>, renounced the kingship and withdrew from among us. Assuredly since what he foretold has duly overtaken us, it will in turn befall you also". The man listened to this story with astonishment and when they reached the city he repeated it. Rumour of this report travelled from mouth to mouth among rich and poor till it was told the king. He bade them seek the man who had first related it. This man was one of the notables of the city, with many kinsmen and brothers. When he was brought before the king, it so befell that smoke from the fire of the king's wrath raised steam from the lid of his brain up to Capella. Straightway he commanded that the man be punished. When his dependents heard this, they gathered at the palace with the whole populace of the city, and a revolt broke out which was beyond quelling and which ended in the king's death, the scattering of the people and the ruin of the city" <sup>6</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> MS. A has هیچ حجتی (M.).

<sup>2</sup> This Arabic verse is not in Darmesteter's MSS.

<sup>3</sup> MS. A has کنار (M.).

<sup>4</sup> The translation "bounties" is based on a conjectural reading of Minovi's, namely کفران در قبول منافع.

<sup>5</sup> Cf. modern Persian colloquial برگه این ندارم "I'm not game for this" (M.).

<sup>6</sup> In the *Pañcatantra* version of this story (see intro., above, p. 15), it is the surviving king of the monkeys who avenges his former subjects by contriving the death of the king and his people. The story in the *Sindbād Nāme* stops short with the slaughter of the monkeys.

When the secretary Rastin had reached this point in his discourse to Toyūšāh, the latter said: "Where is this parable and story leading, and what is your purpose in relating it?" Rastin told how matters stood between himself and Bīrī, the secretary of Darius, and said: "Painful though it may be to the King of kings, yet the best course (37) is to dismiss me, that this strife may end". The King of kings said: "Be silent and say nothing of this secret. The matter will doubtless settle itself". Not long after Bīrī died, and it was said that Toyūšāh had had him poisoned at the house of a general.

When the measure of Toyūšāh's days was full, his bodily nature was resolved into its elements and the falcon of death bore off all his desire. *The crowned ruler assembles accoutrements and men in numbers, but death unaided snatches thousands away.* Then Darius seated himself on his father's throne and the peoples of the world offered him felicitations. From India and China<sup>1</sup>, from Greece and Palestine they gathered at his court with presents and offerings, fair women and tokens to be remembered by. It has been said: *The fortunes of the world are at once both cruel and kind. One tree withers under them and another casts its shade.*

Darius could not forbear first granting the vazirship to Bīrī's brother. He did not reflect on the saying: *If you are one of the rulers of men, rule the noble with kindness and generosity, but rule the base with contumely, for on contumely they will reform. The base are to be subdued.* When Bīrī's brother had acquired absolute authority over the realm of Darius, in revenge for his brother he carried fabrications to the king concerning the famous men and leaders, the rulers and commanders who had been associates and friends of Rastin. Since the king was young and arrogant and lacked training in affairs, he would not sanction the pardon of transgressions, till it came about that through- (38) out the world the coinage of men's hearts was debased for him and hatred of him became fixed in men's innermost thoughts and trust in his words and deeds vanished. He abandoned the customs of the ancients and adopted this secretary's new ways. When tidings came that Alexander was in the field on his western borders, then the king was set on the steed of foolhardihood and the reins of presumption

<sup>1</sup> For "China" MS. A has چین (M.).

were given into his hand. When the encounter took place, some deserted him, one group set about making terms with the enemy, and others flung themselves upon him and slew him. They repented thereafter, but it was when repentance for that wickedness was without avail. *And on the morrow he turned down the palms of his hands for what he had spent thereon*<sup>1</sup>.

The King of kings has not made this a rule, that none who comes after him should name his heir, nor has he made it final<sup>2</sup>. All he has done is to indicate the wisest course, saying: "We do not seek to prevent them putting an end to what seemed to us right, for we know nothing of hidden wisdom. The hidden world is far above, and ours is that of growth and decay<sup>3</sup>. In all respects and phases the two are opposed, and the people of this world have no knowledge of the other. It may be that a time will come which will be at variance with our counsel<sup>4</sup>, when fittingness will bear a different face".

As for what you wrote, that "ministers, councillors and men of sagacity should be consulted in this matter, that they may appoint a successor", know that we have desired that in this decision the King of kings should be unique among rulers, not consulting any man<sup>5</sup>, nor being persuaded to an appointment by words and signs, meetings and (39) discussions. We have desired that he should write three copies of a letter in his own hand, and entrust each to a faithful and reliable person, one to the chief mobad, another to the chief secretary<sup>6</sup>, and the third to the commander-in-chief; so that when the world is abandoned by the King of kings — *Morning and night he comes and goes; but the time is near when he will come and go no more* — then they will cause the chief mobad to be in readiness; and these other two persons will come together, and they will deliberate, and will break the seal of the writings to see on which son the choice of these three persons will fall. If the

<sup>1</sup> *Qur'ān* XVIII, 40 (Palmer's translation).

<sup>2</sup> It is possible from A to read either ختم "concluding, conclusive", or ختم "determining, decisive" (M.).

<sup>3</sup> γένεσις and φθάσις, in Pahlavi *bawišn* (YHWWNšn) and *wināišn*; see *Zend-Avesta*, III, p. xxxiii (D.).

<sup>4</sup> In A the word رای (here translated as "counsel") is replaced by a strange form زار, and the whole sentence appears to have been re-written by a later hand (M.).

<sup>5</sup> A has مخلوق (not مخلوق) (M.).

<sup>6</sup> Pahlavi *dabirān mahišt*, more officially *Ērān-dabirbad* (D.); cf. above, p. 41 n. 2.

chief mobad's<sup>1</sup> choice accords with the choice of all three, it will be announced to the people; but if the mobad is at variance, nothing will be divulged. The people will hear neither of the writings nor of the mobad's decision and utterance, till the mobad has retired alone with the herbad and with devout and ascetic men and has seated himself in worship and prayer. Behind them virtuous and pure men will raise their hands in amens and entreaties, in submission and supplication. When they cease at the time of evening prayer, they will resolve upon whatever God (exalted be His realm) has put into the mobad's mind. That night they will set the crown and throne in the audience-room and the groups of noblemen will take up their positions in their own places. The mobad, together with herbad and nobles, the illustrious and the pillars of the realm, will go to the assembly of the princes; and they will range themselves before them and will say: "We have carried our perplexity before God Almighty and He has deigned to show us the right way and to instruct us in what is best". The mobad will cry aloud<sup>2</sup>, saying: "The angels have approved the kingship of such-an-one, son of such-an-one. Acknowledge him also, ye creatures of (40) God, and good tidings be yours!" They will take up that prince and seat him on the throne and place the crown on his head, and taking him by the hand will say: "Do you accept the kingship from God Almighty (glory be to His name) according to the religion of Zoroaster<sup>3</sup>, upheld by the King of kings, Guštāsp son of Luhrāsp, and restored by Ardašīr son of Pāpak?" The king will accept this covenant and will say: "Please God I shall be given grace to secure the welfare of my people". His servants and retinue will remain with him, and the

<sup>1</sup> The word *mōbad*, in the phrase *mōbad mōbadān*, restored in the Tehran ed., is present in A (M.). A different and more logical account of the procedure described here is to be found in the *Testament of Ardašīr* (a Persian translation of the passage is given by Minovi, Tehran ed., pp. 60-1). There it is said that Ardašīr advised his descendants to name their own successors, but not to divulge their choice. Instead they were to write the name on four pieces of paper, which, signed and sealed, were to be given to four persons among the dignitaries of the realm. On the king's death the four copies were to be opened and compared, in order to find the heir. There is no question of the opinion of the dignitaries themselves having anything to do with the selection. They were merely to be the custodians of the king's choice. The version in the *Letter of Tansar* has a strong clerical bias.

<sup>2</sup> MS. A has *بند بر دارد* (M.).

<sup>3</sup> The translation is Minovi's; Darmesteter took *قبول کردی...بردين* to mean instead: "Do you accept the religion (of Zoroaster)".

rest of the thronging multitude will return to their own affairs and occupations<sup>1</sup>.

Then as to your question concerning the King of king's feasting and fighting and his states of peace and war: I declare to you that the earth has four parts<sup>2</sup>. One part is the land of the Turks, stretching from the western borders of India to the eastern borders of Rome<sup>3</sup>. The second part lies between Rome and the Copts and Berbers. The third part, that of the blacks<sup>4</sup>, stretches from the Berbers to India; and the fourth part is this land which is called Persia and which has as its title "The Land of the Humble", from the river of Balkh up to the furthestmost borders of the land of Āṣarbāigān and of Persarmenia, and from the Euphrates and the land of the Arabs up to Ōmān and Makrān and thence to Kābul and Toxaristān. This fourth part is the chosen stretch of earth, and bears to other lands the relation of head and navel, hump and belly. I shall explain this to you: as for the head, that is because from the time of Īraj son of Afrīdūn headship and kingship belonged to our kings and they were rulers over all. Differences

<sup>1</sup> This semi-elective character of the kingship, which is not mentioned by the Persian historians, has nevertheless left its trace in the scenes of acclamation by the nobles which take place at each accession in Firdausi and Tabari. To what extent the right to elect remained theoretical or was a reality it is difficult to say, given the silence of the historical texts. The fact that the king often had as successor his brother or uncle, instead of his son, proves that direct succession according to primogeniture was not a recognised principle (D.).

<sup>2</sup> The conception of the division of the world into four parts is an old one. It is chiefly attested in the further east, notably India and China; but the version which is both one of the oldest and the one closest to that in the *Letter* is preserved in Manichaean i.e. in Iranian tradition. In the Coptic version of the Manichaean *Kephalaia* (ed. H.J. Polotsky, Stuttgart, 1940, Ch. LXXVII) Mani is represented as naming the four kingdoms as 1) Babylon and Persia 2) Rome 3) the kingdom of the Axumites (i.e. Abyssinia) and 4) Siliis (i.e. China, or some northern state). This version presumably belongs to the 3rd century A.C. Indian versions, of which the oldest are also dated to the 3rd century A. C., give the kingdoms as 1) India 2) Persia 3) China and 4) the northern barbarians. Later Persian versions usually give 1) Persia 2) India 3) Rome and 4) the Turks (H.).

Deh Khoda has noticed that this part of the *Letter*, from p. 40.7 of the Tehran ed. ("the earth has four parts") down to p. 41.10 ("all the sciences that there are upon earth"), is preserved in a closely-corresponding Arabic version in the *Kitābu-l Buldān* of Ibnu-l Faqīh, who gives it as the utterance of Ardašīr i Pāpakān; see Minovi, Tehran ed., p. 64.

<sup>3</sup> This reference to the Turks led Darmesteter to doubt the authenticity of this whole passage, but see above, intro., p. 19.

<sup>4</sup> The word *سیاهان* "blacks" is evidently a mistranslation by Ibn Isfandiār of the Arabic *كور السواد*, "districts of the Sawād", preserved by Ibnu-l Faqīh (M.).

which arose among the peoples of the earth were settled by their decrees and counsels and to them the peoples sent their daughters and tribute and offerings. As for the navel, that is because our land lies (41) in the midst of other lands and our people are the most noble and illustrious of beings. The horsemanship of the Turk<sup>1</sup>, the intellect of India, and the craftsmanship and art of Greece, God (blessed be His realm) has endowed our people with all these, more richly than they are found in the other nations separately. He has withheld from them the ceremonies of religion and the serving of kings which He gave to us. And He made our appearance and our colouring and our hair according to a just mean, without blackness prevailing or yellowness or ruddiness; and the hair of our beards and heads neither too curly like the negro's, nor quite straight like the Turk's. As for the hump, that is because our country, although small in comparison with the other countries, enjoys more advantages and a more abundant life. As for the belly, that is because they say of our country that all that exists in the other three parts of the world is brought to our country and is for our enjoyment, be it food or drugs or perfumes; even as food and drink goes to the belly. And He has endowed us with all the sciences that there are upon earth. Our kings have never been accused of slaughter and pillage, treachery and irreligion. Even if two kings were at variance, or if they extended their protection to religion, exterminating mischief-makers by pillage and slaughter, yet they did not allow captives to be called slaves and claimed for bondage, but peopled cities with them. They did not impose levies on their subjects for plunder<sup>2</sup> and dominance, or to gratify greed for wealth, and their own passions and desires. If contention arose among them, they restrained it by truth and law and argument. A thousand of our soldiers have never met a foe of twenty thousand strong without being victorious and triumphant<sup>3</sup>, because they have never been instigators (42) in tyranny and war and slaughter. You will have heard that Afrā-

<sup>1</sup> MS. A has ترك (not تركي) (M.). On pp. 64-6 of the Tehran edition Minovi gives passages from Islamic authors illustrating Persian respect for Turks, Indians and Greeks, in contrast with their contempt for the Arab.

<sup>2</sup> MS. A has تنگب, like the copy (M.).

<sup>3</sup> MS. A has منصور و مظفر آمدند, without بر; the منصور of the Tehran ed. is a misprint (M.).

siyāb the Turk betrayed Siyāvaš<sup>1</sup>. Our forefathers fought him in 200 places and had the victory in each<sup>2</sup>, till the time when they slew him and the murderers of Siyāvaš and conquered all the lands of the Turk. So today the King of kings has cast the shadow of his majesty over all who have acknowledged his pre-eminence and service and have sent him tribute, and has protected their borders from attack by his own men. Thereafter he has devoted all his thoughts to attacking the Greeks and pursuing his quarrel against that people; and he will not rest till he has avenged Darius against the successors of Alexander, and has replenished his coffers and the treasury of state, and has restored by the capture of descendants of his soldiers<sup>3</sup> the cities which Alexander laid waste in Iran. And he will impose on them tribute such as they have ever paid our kings for the land of Egypt and for Syria; for in ancient times they had made conquest in the land<sup>4</sup> of the Hebrews. When Nebuchadnezzar went there and subdued them<sup>5</sup>, he did not establish any<sup>6</sup> of our people in that place because it had a bad climate, poor water and chronic sicknesses. He entrusted that region to the king of the Greeks, contenting himself with tribute. So things remained down to the time of Xosrau Anōšīrvān<sup>7</sup>.

As for what you mentioned of your own circumstances and those of the people with you in Tabaristān and Pārsīwār, know that you

<sup>1</sup> ک is to be omitted after ترك (M.); for the story of Afrāsiyāb and Siyāvaš in pre-Islamic sources Darmesteter refers to the Avestan *Yast*, IX, 18, XIX, 77, and to his own *Études iraniennes*, II, 227.

<sup>2</sup> MS. A has بجمله, like the copy (M.).

<sup>3</sup> The words "of his soldiers" have been added for clarity in the English translation.

<sup>4</sup> MS. A has the words عبرانيون (M.).

<sup>5</sup> Pride led the Iranians to adopt the Chaldaean king Nebuchadnezzar, who conquered Jerusalem and took captive the Jews, as one of their own heroes, making him a son of the champion Gudarz, and one of the captains of king Luhrāsp; see E. Poure-Davud, *The Yasts*, II, p. 208, cited by Minovi, Tehran ed., p. 67.

<sup>6</sup> MS. A has کی را (M.).

<sup>7</sup> On the final sentence of this paragraph see above, intro., p. 13 with n. 9. Much of what precedes it accords admirably with the time and pretensions of Ardašīr. Darmesteter cites a passage from Herodianus recording claims made in congruent terms by Ardašīr on the "provinces of Asia", namely that since these provinces had been governed by Persian satraps from the time of Cyrus to Darius III, "who was conquered by Alexander", he, Ardašīr, would be doing no injustice to Rome in claiming what was his own inheritance. As Darmesteter remarks, it was a strange coincidence that the Roman emperor on whom Ardašīr declared war was Alexander Severus, who himself took his namesake, Alexander the Great, for a model.

are one among the multitudes of the world. You can do as the rest do. If you do other than that, well, none can cope with all the world.

(43) Then you declared: "I have kinship and blood-ties with the King of kings through Ardašīr son of Isfandiyār, whom they called Bahman"<sup>1</sup>. My answer to you is this: In my eyes this latter Ardašīr is of far greater worth than the Ardašīr of old. If you wish to seek among the people of your father's or your mother's house, who are your kin, one to excel you in one or two qualities, inevitably you can and will find him; but not everyone who is superior to you in one or two qualities is your peer. If it were so, it would be proper to prefer asses to horses, in that the ass's hoof is harder than the horse's<sup>2</sup> and asses more inured to toil. But the truth is that in deeds and qualities and excellencies regard should be had for the general and prevailing, not for the exceptional and rare, which may be looked upon as freakish. You must guard your manly dignity and accept my counsel and hasten to render homage.

I had thought not to make you answer lest my reply awake your displeasure, *seeing that it contains what it does of scorn*. But again I feared lest you attribute silence to other and different reasons. Those deeds and commands of the King of kings which you have enumerated

Christensen (*Acta Orientalia*, X, pp. 54-5) points out that this last question by Gušnasp is about "the King of king's feasting and fighting and his states of peace and war", and that Tansar has answered it only in part, omitting any words about feasting. The *Letter of Tansar* was, as Christensen has established, known to the anonymous author of the *Fārs-Nāme*; and it happens that in that book there is a passage which concerns Ardašīr's feasting, which Christensen believes to be derived from the *Letter*, and to have been omitted by Ibn Isfandiyār (see further above, intro., p. 3 note 7). This seems a reasonable supposition, although it is not so easy to agree with Christensen about exactly where the passage should be inserted in Ibn Isfandiyār's text.

The passage in the *Fārs-Nāme* (*Gibb Memorial Series*, n.s., I, 1921, p. 61) runs as follows: "His (i.e. Ardašīr's) close companions were all wise men, and men of excellence. On two days of each week he held assembly. On one day, at a grand audience, he drank wine with the great men of the realm, and treated each graciously, behaving to him as was fit. On the other day he drank wine in seclusion with the wise men and men of excellence who were his close companions, and profited from them. Throughout his assemblies the talk ran seriously, and never turned to jest.

The other days of the week he was occupied with administering the state, and conquering the world, and smiting his foes. His endeavour was to defeat his enemies, and he held delights forbidden him until success was complete".

<sup>1</sup> See F. Justi, *Iranisches Namenbuch*, p. 374, Wohu-manah no. 2.

<sup>2</sup> از آن است MS. A (M.).

and which have amazed you should cause you no wonder. The wonder lies in this, how, alone, he pursued and won the lordship and kingdom of the world, though all the land surged with lions of whetted appetite, and though 400 years had passed in which the world was filled with wild and savage beasts<sup>1</sup> and devils in human form, without religion or decency, learning or wisdom or shame. They were a people who brought nothing but desolation and corruption to the world; cities became deserts, and buildings were razed. In the space of fourteen years<sup>2</sup>, through policy and strength and skill, he brought it about that he made water flow in every desert and established towns and created (44) groups of villages, in a way not achieved in the 4000 years before him. He found builders and inhabitants and caused roads to be made. He established customs concerning eating and drinking, and clothes for travel and for home. He sets his hand to nothing without gaining the people's trust in his ability, and without accomplishing it surely. He has taken such pains for the future – up to a thousand years after his own day – that within that time no evil will befall. He has more joy in the future and more concern in the interests of those who will come after him than he has in his own auspicious age. Yet good order in the affairs of the people affects him more than the welfare of his own body and soul. Whoever considers his achievements during these fourteen years, and whoever sees and understands his excellence and learning, his powers of exposition and eloquence<sup>3</sup>, his wrath and graciousness, his liberality and modesty, his sagacity and shrewdness, will agree that since the power of the world's Creator arched<sup>4</sup> this azure sphere the world has not known so true a king. This gate to goodness and good order, set open by him for the people, will remain so for a thousand years; and were it not, as we know, that after a thousand years, by reason of neglect of his testament, riot and disorder

<sup>1</sup> MS. A is torn at this point; B has the word وحوش, but the other words supplied in the Tehran ed. remain conjectural (M.).

<sup>2</sup> Darmesteter sees in these 14 years the space of time needed by Ardašīr to establish his dominion over the different local rulers of the Parthian Empire. The violence of the attack on Parthian rule probably owes much to Ibn Isfandiyār's extensions.

<sup>3</sup> "Powers of exposition and eloquence" render وضاحت و بیان. The following word جسم has been left untranslated, although it is in A also, since it yields no evident sense, and spoils the symmetry of the sentence.

<sup>4</sup> خم داد است MS. A (M.).

will come into the world, and that all that he bound will be loosed and all that he loosed will be bound, we should say that he had toiled for the world to eternity<sup>1</sup>. Though we are creatures of mortality and nothingness, yet is it wisdom to labour for perpetuity and to plan for everlastingness. It befits you to be such a man. Do not aid destruction, that it may come the more swiftly upon you and your people; for the sages have said: *Mortality is sufficient to itself and needs not your help. It behoves you to aid yourself and your people by what adorns you in this transient abode and benefits you in the everlasting one*<sup>2</sup>. Be assured that whoever abandons striving and leans upon destiny and fate will have held himself in contempt; and that whoever devotes himself wholly to seeking and striving, denying fate and destiny, is ignorant and deluded. The wise man should follow a course between striving and yielding to fate, and not content himself with either one; for destiny and striving are like two bales of a traveller's luggage upon a beast's back. If of the two one is heavier and the other lighter, the luggage will fall to the ground, the beast's back be broken and the traveller be distressed and unable to reach his goal. If both bales are equal, the traveller will not be harassed, the beast too will be comfortable, and they will reach their destination.

Men say that long ago there was a king called Jahtal<sup>3</sup>. He believed in fate<sup>4</sup> and was fanatical and bigoted about it. He used to say: *Man cannot efface what destiny has written and what the moving pen has traced upon the slate*. The men of his age and people of his time repudiated his doctrines and way of life, so that one of his brothers

<sup>1</sup> According to Zoroastrian chronology, the world lasts 12,000 years. Zoroaster appeared at the end of the 9th millenium; and each of the three remaining millenia is to be marked by calamities which will be terminated by the coming of one of three successive saviours, the sons of Zoroaster. Ardašir was held to appear in the year 553 of the 10th millenium. Probably therefore in the prophecy of the disaster to follow him the term "a thousand years" is loosely used. The Arabic text of this passage is to be found, presumably taken from Ibnu'l Muqaffa', in Mas'ūdi, *Kutāb ut-Tanbih*, ed. de Goeje, pp. 98-99 (D.).

<sup>2</sup> Minovi points out that these lines are in excellent Arabic and possibly, therefore, the work of Ibnu'l Muqaffa' himself.

<sup>3</sup> On this story see *Asia Major*, n.s., V, i (1954), p. 50 ff. and intro., above, p. 15.

<sup>4</sup> It is probable that Ibn Isfandiār adopted the term *قدر* from the text of Ibnu'l Muqaffa', where it was presumably used as an adjective derived from *قدر* "fate", and hence had simply the meaning "fatalist". By Ibn Isfandiār's own day the word had come to be a technical term for one who believed in free-will, as opposed to a *جبري*, a believer in fate (M.).

prevailed over him in contest for the sovereignty, and drove him and his children out of the kingdom. They attached themselves to Qirānsāh, and passed their days without dignity in his service. Having put his trust in fate and destiny, Jahtal made no effort to seek back his realm. Matters reached a point when they lacked strength to gain a livelihood. His children went to him and said: "Your belief in destiny has made us of little esteem, and your craven spirit and lowly disposition and faint-heartedness have brought you to this — like a camel, which, because of its cowardice, is led by a ten-year-old boy through the markets, laden with dried grass and wearing a nose-rope. Had the camel the heart of a sparrow, a mere child could not humiliate it so". And to illustrate this, they told a story for their father which has become proverbial among men of learning. They said: "There was once a blind man in a village on the edge of a desert. He had no guide to lead him about, and nowhere any means of livelihood. With him was a lame man, sunk like him in poverty. A virtuous man used every day to bring a little food for them and give it them, and they provided themselves therewith; till one day they waited as usual, but his time being ended<sup>1</sup>, death had come to that good man and he had passed away. A day or two went by, and the two poor fellows became weak with hunger. They thought of a plan whereby the blind man was to take the lame on his shoulders and the lame man was to be his guide, and they were to go round the houses and the market; and in this way they made a livelihood and were content, attaining what they desired". Jahtal said to his children: "You are right. Adversity and misfortune have kept me in this state". They became of one accord, endured hardship in striving for the kingdom, and by effort won what they desired. *He is a helpless man who forswears pursuit, putting his trust in what destinies and fates will do. If counsel were of no avail, there would be no thought; if pursuit were useless, there would be no running.* (47)

The king and prince of Tabaristān must forgive me for the boldness I have shown; for I thought it right to omit no piece of counsel, through respect for your father and the greatness of your family; and not to incline towards hypocrisy and flattery, dissimulation and

<sup>1</sup> MS. A has *وقت اجل*, instead of the variant *وقت اصل* (M.).



smoothness. *I shall not visit<sup>1</sup> men for flattery's sake. The corner-stones of my being lean away from such baseness. I am kept from a position of contempt by magnanimity of such loftiness that compared with it the cheek of Azimech<sup>2</sup> is laid in dust.*

Thus far is the translation of the words of Ibnu-l Muqaffa'. Peace be upon you! But I have read in books that when Gušnasp king of Tabaristān read Tansar's letter, he went to pay fealty to Ardašīr son of Pāpak, and surrendered his throne and crown. Ardašīr deemed lavishness fitting in showing him favour and welcome. After a space of time, when he had resolved upon the expedition against Greece, he sent him back and granted to him Tabaristān and the other lands of Pāšwār. The realm of Tabaristān remained with his family till the time of king Pērōz. When Qobād became King of kings, the Turks made raids upon Xorāsān and the borders of Tabaristān. Qobād consulted the mobads. After seeking an augury and conferring, they decided that the King of kings should send there his eldest son, named Kayūs, for his star was the same as the star of that land<sup>3</sup>. His story will be told in its own place.

<sup>1</sup> MS. A has بَرَدَار (M.).

<sup>2</sup> The Arabic as-Simak, corrupted by medieval astronomers in the west into Azimech, is used for both Spica and Arcturus (M.).

<sup>3</sup> Pērōz died in 484 A. C. His son Qobād (Kavād) reigned from 488 to 531. On the appointment of Qobād's eldest son Kayūs (Kāūs, Qābūs) as ruler of Tabaristān see Iqbal, *Tarix-i Tabaristān*, pp. 147-150, Browne, *Abridged Translation of the History of Tabaristān*, pp. 92-94.

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# IDIOMATIC PERSIAN WORDS AND PHRASES IN THE *LETTER*

- barg-i čunin marg na būd 'he was not ready for such a death' 59 with n. 5.
- bāyi, verb, 2nd sg., "you must" 27 n. 5.
- guš dāstan "to be aware of, consider, care for, protect" 33 n. 1.
- mardom-zāde 'a noble, man of rank' 44 n. 3.
- padid kardan "to appoint" 28 n. 1.
- qabaq 'butt, target' 26 n. 5.
- qadri 'fatalist' 68 n. 4.
- t'abiyat 'guile, stratagem' 26 n. 4.
- zād-u-būd 'place where one is born and lives' 56 n. 1.

